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MARGERY

by

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TRUEHEART MARGERY

NORMA BRIGHT CARSON

TRUEHEART MARGERY

BY

NORMA BRIGHT CARSON
AUTHOR OF "ROSEMARY—FOR REMEMBRANCE," ETC.

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TO MY HUSBAND

ROBERT CARSON

B-7101

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BOOK ONE: JEAN

BOOK ONE: JEAN

CHAPTER I

THEY HEAR THE GREAT NEWS

"WHATEVER shall I do with that child?" Great-Aunt Matilda Craven sat down in the largest rocking-chair in the sunniest corner of the sunny sitting-room at "TIMBERVALE," took out her big horned spectacles from her many-coloured knitting-bag, got out her knitting, and to the tune of needles clicking, philosophised over the sins of the world in general and of a certain few persons in particular.

"If Richard Craven thinks he'll ever get to Heaven after neglecting that child all these years, he's mightily mistaken—that's all I've got to say. If he thinks that this is the way his poor little wife would want to have her baby brought up, he's more mistaken still. If the Cravens weren't such stiff-necked specimens of humanity anyway, he would have been back here years ago doing his duty by his child and seeing that she was properly brought up.

"What can an old woman like me, who never

N Y P L

had any children, do with a girl who falls out of every tree on the estate one after another and threatens to break her neck with every fall; who puts kittens under the pulpit on Communion day so that they start to whine just as the blessing is being asked, and who runs wild and harum-scarum all day long with that young limb of Satan, Gerry Gordon, and reads queer books until far into the night, then leaves the lights burning when she falls asleep at last through sheer exhaustion? She's a Craven if there ever was one! Don't I remember how my own poor departed husband, William, used to read magazines half the night and let the live ashes from his pipe set fire to the bed-clothes?

"Five times within thirteen years I've written to Richard Craven begging him to come home and look after his child, but never so much as a line will he answer. Sometimes I think——"

But her thoughts were here interrupted by the telephone bell ringing. Great-Aunt Matilda invariably jumped at the sound of a telephone. It was as much a matter of custom for her to do this as to jump at the sight of a mouse. But, needless to say, once the jump was correctly accomplished, Mrs. Craven would become rigid, waiting with both ears cocked for any possible scrap of information or news that might come her way. It was, therefore, very annoying, in this present instance, to have that mischievous Jean catch her in an at-

titude of careful listening, as, a moment or two later—just when the identity of the person at the other end of the line was about to be established—she came running wildly in, with,

"Oh, Auntie, Gerry says that father is coming home!"

If Jean had dropped a bomb right into Great-Aunt Matilda's lap, the old lady could scarcely have looked more startled. Telephone forgotten, philosophy thrown to the four winds, Great-Aunt Matilda dropped her knitting—spilling the thread over the carpet—hastily removed her horned spectacles, and gave Jean a hopelessly bewildered look.

"Whose father?" she managed to say.

"Why, my father, of course, you dear old goose! Who else's father would it be? My own dear, dear, old Daddy, whom I've never even seen! Oh, Auntie, just to think how surprised he'll be when he finds a great big girl like me, when I was only a tiny baby when he saw me the last time."

Jean was a dark little mite of a girl, all black eyes, gleaming white teeth, tousled curly hair and nervous energy. She was painfully thin, to the point of looking ill-nourished, a misrepresentation entirely, since the child had a ravenous appetite that never could be satisfied, and was a terror to the kitchen, where she held the position of a desperate marauder who exercises a God-given right to plunder without ceasing. Now her little

face was flushed to a rose pink, her dark eyes were shining, and her whole small body seemed to quiver with excited and joyous expectation.

"Hump!" commented Aunt Matilda, but checked herself before actually voicing her thought. "Richard Craven never saw his baby," she murmured to herself. Didn't she remember it all as if it had happened only yesterday? For a moment her eyes grew faraway in expression and her hands lay quietly in her lap.

But Jean was filled with only one idea.

"Tell me about him, Auntie," she said, in a pretty, coaxing way that she saved for very special occasions. As a matter of fact, Jean and the Great-Aunt were good friends on the whole, only Aunt Matilda did not understand children very well, and Jean, sensing her lack of sympathy, naturally resented it.

"What does my father look like?" she persisted.

"Well," said the old lady, "the last time I saw him, he was tall and broad and brown."

"Brown like me?" the girl interrupted.

"Yes, brown like you, but big and very strong. Why, he could carry your mother almost with one hand!"

"But mother was tiny—like me, too?"

"Yes, your mother was small like you."

"Do I look very like her, Aunt Matilda?" wistfully.

"Very, my child. So much so that the thought of your father seeing you almost frightens me!"

"But why, Auntie?"

"Child, some day, when the proper time comes, you'll know the whole story." Great-Aunt Matilda could be mysterious as well as majestic, and in this case she chose to be both.

"But tell me," she wanted to know, "when is your father supposed to arrive?"

"Please, madam," came a voice from the door. Louis, the butler, was bowing under the portières. "Please, Monsieur Gordon was just on the telephone. He is on his way to call upon you and wishes to see you, privately, madam."

"Very well, Louis. Tell Mr. Gordon when he arrives that I am here and show him in." Whereupon Aunt Matilda hurriedly gathered her things together, took a glance at her cap in the mirror, and composed herself for a formal call.

"You must go now, Jean," she said, with an important air of expecting something most unusual to happen. "Mr. Gordon has doubtless come to give me all the details of this story about your father's coming home."

"But, Auntie, I want to hear all about it, too. Surely, I ought to know about my own, own father's coming! Oh, Auntie, Auntie, how I am going to love him! Why, I love him this very minute! Haven't you a picture of him anywhere, Auntie?"

Aunt Matilda hesitated. Years before she had been told, with painful emphasis put upon the telling, that for no consideration, nor in any circumstances, might she show that one picture of Richard Craven still in her possession. But now the occasion seemed to warrant disobedience to the injunction; also, the temptation was strong; what could it matter, now that the original himself would most likely soon be here?

"Run and get the little gilt box in my top bureau-drawer," she commanded breathlessly. "Be quick about it!"

Jean was off like a whirlwind. It seemed scarcely a minute till she returned, box in hand. But in that minute a picture had flashed out from Great-Aunt Matilda's memory.

The scene was in this same sitting-room. She herself had come to look for the man who had been as a madman from the moment of his wife's threatened death. He had been sitting almost where she was sitting now, and his eyes were glazed as if they had stared into space until they had lost their function.

"Richard," she had said gently, "Richard." He had started at her touch.

"Yes, Aunt Matilda," he answered lifelessly.

"The nurse has the baby. Do you know that you have never seen it?"

At that he had turned to her a face so full

of despair that she had started back at the sight of it.

"Don't ask me to see—the baby," he answered, scarcely above a whisper. "Don't ask me ever to see it. I hate it, I tell you I hate it! Don't bring it near me, do you hear?" his voice rising. "Don't ever speak to me of it again!"

"There, there, Richard," Aunt Matilda soothed him. "It's all right. I'll see that you're let alone." And she had left him to sink back into those depths of misery in which characteristically he had wallowed since his wife's burial.

And he had gone away without having seen the child. But here was the baby, a girl of thirteen, and as proud and as self-willed as the father who had chosen to deny her. For though Jean might outwardly be the living image of her dead mother, in character she was a Craven through and through.

"Here's the box, Auntie dear," called Jean, as she came tripping through the doorway. Would Richard Craven remember, as the Great-Aunt remembered, that other little Jean, so like this one, with whom he had shared his boyhood pains and pleasures, and who had grown up to become his adored wife? Aunt Matilda adjusted her spectacles in a slightly confused way. Jean must not suspect her emotion. She took the little box and opened it, and there, almost on the top, lay a small

photograph. In silence the old lady looked at it and then handed it to Jean.

It was a handsome face, but the face of a man of domineering spirit. The light in the eyes was the proud light of battle and the jaw was almost cruelly square.

Jean looked at it, holding it first this way and then that.

"My daddy," she whispered. "My own, ownest, dearest daddy. Aunt Matilda, tell me, do you think he will love me as I shall love him?" There was anxiety in the voice; Jean's hopes were mixed with a fear of some unknown quantity.

Mrs. Craven was spared a reply. At the door Louis was bowing John Gordon in.

"Run along," she whispered to Jean, "and put the picture away."

And Jean, with a bright little nod in response to John Gordon's greeting, crossed the room to another door. But she did not go out by the door. Some impulse, irresistible, impelled her to pause, as her Aunt and her father's old friend and lawyer shook hands. Here was the chance to learn more about this mysterious father. A fleeting thought of wrong-doing crossed her mind, but she put it aside impatiently. What could there be to say that she had not a right to hear? It was only a notion, this effort to bar her out. She must know all about her father.

In the back of the room a great davenport stood

before the fireplace. Jean slipped quietly on to this, and lay there, the sound of her soft breathing overcome by the crackling of the logs burning on the hearth.

CHAPTER II

WHAT RICHARD CRAVEN WROTE

"WELL," began John Gordon, shaking hands with Aunt Matilda, "I suppose you've already heard the great news?"

"Richard—he's not dead?—he's really coming home?"

"At last, yes. The prodigal returning—and I think a trifle repentant."

"The child?"

"He says little, but he acknowledges her existence. Let me read you the letter."

They sat down. Mr. Gordon was a very correct man of not more than forty years. He straightened his waistcoat, adjusted a pair of eyeglasses, produced a letter from his vest pocket, and was ready to begin.

"Rome," he started.

"So far"—exclaimed Aunt Matilda. Then waited, as he went on:

"*Dear Jack:*

"You will, without doubt, be astonished to hear from me. I, myself, am astonished to find myself writing this letter. But somehow our lives seem

to run in cycles, and thirteen years of wandering, during which time I believed that I had buried the past and had done with it forever, have brought me back to a sudden, unaccountable longing for a sight of the old home. I never intended to see it again—I meant to let you think me dead. I never wanted the child when I knew that the mother must die for it, but it was welcome to my name, my house and my money. I do not doubt but that it has had, provided it lived—I do not even recollect if it is a boy or a girl—the best of care under Aunt Matilda's guardianship and your own.

"My occupation since leaving home has followed up my youthful ambitions. I am a writer by profession—'Richard Dale' is the name I use—you may have heard of it; I have been prolific and successful. One of my reasons for homesickness I think is that I am laying the scenes of a new novel at 'TIMBERVALE.' My recollections of the place have stirred old memories—I want to sit by the grave of Jean, and live the hours of that glorious youth we shared together, over again.

"I shall have little or no time to bother with a child, whether girl or boy. And insomuch as I never even saw the baby, I have really little fatherly feeling upon which to draw. I have met many children in my wanderings and some of them have become attached to me. But I have seen no child who has had the power to stir my

heart to the point of forgiveness for a natural law that takes a mother in childbirth. Not to save my immortal soul—providing I have one—would I ever again place a woman in the position of having to give her life for the sake of a baby for me.

"Be prepared to find me a trifle 'queer'; I bear that reputation. For months at a time I have tramped the road, a veritable vagabond, with a few dollars in my pockets, living a hermit's life in some woodsy camp or hidden cave, sleeping often under the stars and living on sandwiches, goat's milk and fruit.

"Then, for a while, I go back to the cities, and spend a month in Paris, Berlin or at Monte Carlo. Once in the ten years I have been in New York, but I feared to meet some one whom I knew, and I left after two weeks.

"So, you see, I am a man of mystery the world over—Richard Dale to my new friends, Richard Craven to none save those home-folks who knew me earlier than thirteen years ago.

"I will arrive on the 20th. Do not trouble to meet me. I still have Thomas with me.

Sincerely, as always,
Your friend,
DICK CRAVEN."

"Well," John Gordon smiled as he folded the letter and looked at Aunt Matilda.

"The same old Richard," she snapped, her eyes flashing. "It's just what I used to say to his father, 'Spare the rod and spoil the child.' If he'd been mine he would certainly have gotten that birch rod a good many more times than he did. But all Dick would say was, 'Oh, he's high-spirited, the lad. But he'll make his mark some day.'"

"Well, it looks as if he had made it, all right," commented Gordon. "Richard Dale is one of the big-sellers. I suspected long ago that it was Dick; I recognised certain episodes in the books and felt that only he could have known about those things."

"What's he write—stories?"

Gordon carefully concealed his smile.

"Wonderful stories," he said.

"I never read story-books," Great-Aunt Matilda declared virtuously. "They're mostly lies."

Meanwhile, back on the big davenport, a small girl listened with all ears and momentarily changing expression. At first Jean found it hard to grasp—that casual statement made by the father to whose coming she was looking forward so longingly, to the effect that he had little or no interest in his child. Surely, there was some mistake somewhere. Then came the announcement that he was Richard Dale, and Jean lost all thought of herself in the great wonder that took possession of that her father—her own father—was that

novelist-hero, one of whose books at least had been among those which she had smuggled in at Gerry's behest, and had read not once but many times in the secrecy of her room. Miss Jane, the governess, had found the book and had been properly shocked.

"That's not a book for a girl of thirteen," she had said primly. "Go back to your fairy stories and your Alcott books. Don't let me find you reading anything of the sort again."

"Why, that's the most wonderful and beautiful fairy-story I ever read," declared Jean. And Miss Jane looked at her, openly horrified.

"You're much too precocious for a child of your years," she maintained. "And you will read what I say and nothing else."

Jean did not insist. She had learned long ago that if one was to have one's own way the easiest thing was to take it, and not to argue about it first. Jean had had three governesses, and she had learned a lot from each. What they had learned from their keen little pupil would make a book of itself.

Now Jean pictured to herself the author of "Ripe Wheat" in the light of the photograph which she still held in her hand. So absorbed did she become in her contemplations, that she forgot to listen to the conversation taking place near her, until there penetrated to her consciousness these words:

"If he hates the child he had better stay away."

It was the Great-Aunt speaking, and suddenly Jean sat up. Suppose he should hate her—this hero of her dreams, this father whom she already worshipped! It would break her heart! She would die, she knew, if such a catastrophe should come about.

"He must love me—he shall—he shall!" she cried out, and realised when it was too late that she had betrayed her presence in the room.

Great-Aunt Matilda looked up at the child, leaning over the back of the davenport. Her expression was full of severity.

"Jean, what do you mean by eavesdropping? I told you to leave the room."

Jean's flush was guilty.

"I wanted to hear about my father," she faltered. "But I didn't know that he hated me," she choked over the word: "I wanted him so, and I wanted him to love me. Oh, Uncle Jack, don't you think there's any hope that he will?"

Gordon himself loved Jean as if she were his own.

"Come here, Jeannie girl," he said. She came and sat on his knee.

"Do you know what I think, sweetheart?" he asked, smoothing her hair. "I think that when he sees the little daughter that he doesn't as yet even know, he'll be as much in love with her as any of us are."

"Humph," grunted Aunt Maltida. "Maybe if you'll be a little more sedate and not so wild he'll like you better," she commented.

Jean looked at Uncle Jack appealingly.

"If only I'd been a boy, like Gerry," she sighed. And Great-Aunt Matilda groaned audibly.

"Well, don't let's borrow trouble anyway," suggested Uncle Jack. "This is the eighteenth. Dick will arrive on the twentieth."

"And you and Gerry had better come to dinner that night," Mrs. Craven ventured.

"In one way," began Gordon, "I'd rather not. Dick will be depressed at first, I have not a doubt. Maybe we'd better let him alone for the first day."

"Never," declared the Great-Aunt. "Richard Craven and I were never congenial at the best of times, and I've a lot to forgive him, going away as he did and not coming back for over thirteen years. I don't propose to go through the agonising that I know will attend his first days home —at least not any more of it than is necessary. You and Gerry had better come, and help make things pleasant. Also, what room shall I give him? If I give him the old room he'll remember everything, and if I give him the guest room he'll probably come to the conclusion that I'm trying to make a stranger of him in his own house."

Gordon laughed. Aunt Matilda certainly appreciated her nephew's vagaries.

"Give him his old room, but don't call attention to Jean's room," he said. "Better lock it and keep it locked unless he asks for the key. And let's make everything as cheerful as possible, and perhaps we'll find that thirteen years have made a lot of difference, after all."

"Why didn't he find some nice woman and marry her, anyway?" complained Aunt Matilda. "That is, if any woman would have him, with his awful temper and his smothering affection when the temper is quiet."

"Now, now, Aunt Matilda," Gordon interposed gently. "After all, we're glad, aren't we, that he is coming, and we'll make him royally welcome. Dick is himself, you know, impulsive, generous, egotistical, quick to anger, but as quick to forget the cause of his anger. Why, don't I remember how once, thinking to tease him, I kissed Jean—I thought he would kill me; had not Jean intervened I believe that he might have done so. I left him that day with bitterness in my heart, for I was his dearest friend, and it cut me to the soul to think that he mistrusted me. In less than twenty-four hours he was in my room, apologising like a gentleman, and begging me to forgive him.

"It's hard not to love Dick, though it's hard, too, not to grow impatient with his faults. But, unless I'm greatly mistaken, he is a bigger man

to-day than he was when he went away thirteen long years ago."

And Aunt Matilda, who stood just a little in awe of John Gordon, meekly acquiesced.

Then Gordon turned to Jean. "Little girl," he said, "if you will come with me, I'll tell you what I can about your father. But remember this, Jean," he added gravely, "a good sport never hides behind chairs to hear what it wasn't intended he should hear. I'd have to punish Gerry if I found him doing what you did this afternoon."

"Then perhaps you'd better punish me, too, Uncle Jack," Jean said bravely.

"Not this time. I don't think you quite understood. I'll tell you the story instead. I believe it's your right to know it, anyway."

CHAPTER III

THE STORY THAT JOHN GORDON TOLD JEAN

YOU see, Jean," John Gordon began, "when your father was still a small boy his mother died. Your Great-Aunt, Aunt Matilda, came here to keep house for your grandfather, and she and your father had some exciting times."

"Aunt Matilda doesn't like children," interrupted Jean. "It's funny, though, how she's had to help bring up other people's, isn't it?"

Gordon smiled.

"It is," he admitted. "After all, she's a dear little old lady, and your grandfather owed her a lot, and so does your father. The old home would have left the family years ago if she had not been here to look after it, for your people are wanderers—your father and his father before him have loved the open spaces, and have cared little or nothing for society or the usual pleasures that men have. However, to get back to the story—

"You know about your mother. She and your father and I grew up together. As a boy he was very fond of her; later, he fell desperately in

love with her. She was seventeen when he married her, and you were born less than a year later. As you know, she died then."

"Do you remember when my mother died, Uncle Jack?" inquired Jean.

"Remember?" There was a tinge of bitterness in the man's voice. "Child, if, when I come to die, I remember nothing else, I shall remember every detail of that terrible time."

"Tell me, Uncle Jack."

Gordon hesitated. Then he went on slowly as if lost in his reminiscences.

"You were born at dawn. Gerry was two then, and his mother had been ill. She was not able to come over. They sent for me, telling me that Jean would die. I came at once, and went straight to find your father. I was shown into the west room. It was noon day, and I remember that the sun was shining brightly, but they had drawn the curtains to keep out some of the light. In the big bed in the corner lay your mother, scarcely breathing.

"Your father knelt at the bedside. He did not look up. His eyes were fixed on her face, as if his whole soul were bent on compelling her to live. The nurse and the doctor stood at the foot of the bed. It was very quiet, and I remained perfectly still, until all at once the doctor moved. A change had come over Jean's face. Just for an instant I did not realise what it meant. But

your father must have recognised it as the end. Quick as a flash he had leaped to his feet, and was bending over your mother. His cry must have echoed through the house. Before any of us dreamed of what he might do, he had lifted up the body and had started to carry it to the door."

Gordon paused—he had forgotten the child; he was living that terrible scene all over again. Then he went on,

"I have never yet understood what was his intention. But fortunately the doctor knew him, and was prepared for an emergency. He sprang after him, caught his arm, and before Dick knew it, had plunged the point of a hyperdermic syringe into his wrist. The nurse was already beside him, and together they took the body of Jean and laid it back on the bed. I caught Dick as he staggered, and with the help of Thomas, his man, got him to his own room."

Here Gordon waited for a little, and then continued again,

"He slept quietly for hours. But in the early morning he got away from the house without any one's knowing. He was gone a day and a night, and came home in a taxicab. He did not know where he had been save that he had walked and walked, and had then lain down under some trees, where he must have slept. A little dog woke him up and a small girl directed him to a

railroad station, where he got a train to New York. He took a taxicab at the station in the city and came home.

"We had in the meantime searched for him everywhere. All of us were exhausted. Arrangements for your mother's funeral had to be made, of course, without him. We held the funeral the day after he returned. He wanted to build a great pyre down in the woods and have the body cremated; he was crazy; we persuaded him not to do anything of the kind. So your mother was laid in the family plot.

"A week after the funeral he came to me and told me that he was going away. He wanted $10,000 in cash. He said, 'I may never claim any more of my money. Look after it, for I shall most likely never return.'

"I did not believe him, of course, and so I let him go, thinking that a brief absence might be good for him. But when he had gone I received a letter, and in it he declared that he intended to stay away for good and to begin a new life entirely. You were to be brought up as if you had no father. His name was not to be mentioned to you; you were to see no picture of him; to you he was dead.

"That is the story. I see that it has made you sad. But perhaps it will help you to understand your father. He was my dearest friend, but even I have had difficulty in making allowances for

some of his strange ways. Had your mother lived, perhaps things would have gone easier with him.

"But you must forget that your father thinks that he does not love you. Can you imagine my not loving Gerry? Well, your father will love you—if not so much at first, then more and more with time. Now run along and play; I saw Gerry coming up the avenue a minute ago. Try to forget all but that your father is coming home, and that you are going to be happy in having him with you."

With that a bright-faced boy, tall for his years and as fair as Jean was dark, came into the room.

"Hello, Dad," he greeted. "Say, Jean, you forgot that we were going to see that bird's nest down in the back woods to-day. I waited at the turnstile an hour," he finished aggrievedly.

"Jean has had other things to do, son," replied his father. "Perhaps, though, she will want to go with you now."

"Yes, of course I'll go," Jean answered. "I'm sorry I made you wait, Gerry. And, Uncle Jack, thank you for what you have told me. I hope that my father'll be a little like you," she completed wistfully.

"My dad's sure all right," volunteered Gerry. "If your father's half as good you'll be lucky."

Gordon sat at the window after the boy and girl had gone.

Aunt Matilda came and found him still sitting there, deep in thought.

"Shall we have some tea here?" she asked, refraining wisely from any comment on his musings.

He started at the sound of her voice.

"Thanks, yes, Aunt Matilda," he answered, and sighed. He, too, had had his sorrows. But he had borne them as a man should.

CHAPTER IV

CRAVEN COMES HOME

JEAN, standing at the library window, saw the automobile turn in at the entrance gates. On the instant her heart skipped a beat. Her father —he was coming! She wanted to dance and sing; she wanted to run and throw her arms around his neck and kiss him; but she had been told to stay where she was until she should be summoned.

Contrary to her own wishes she wore her best white frock, while a big, pink bow held her tumbled curls together. Jean always longed to take the scissors and cut her hair short like a boy's. Once she had tried it, but punishment followed, so swift and so severe, that she had never succeeded in mustering courage for a second attempt. But if there was one thing she hated, it was a pink bow. Blue she could tolerate, but pink! It made her awkward and self-conscious, and Jean at her best was neither. And now, just when she needed to be at her best, Aunt Matilda had insisted upon putting her into stiffly starched linen with salmon pink ribbons by way of ornamentation.

However, all this was quickly to be forgotten, for a tall, distinguished-looking gentleman was even now stepping out of the big, grey limousine. This must be her father! A small, plain man, with a couple of bags, followed him. The tall man lifted his eyes and let them wander over the old house. Jean shrank back from the window, a sudden panic seizing her.

Then both men passed into the house and Jean heard greetings being exchanged below.

"Dick, old man, at last!" It was John Gordon who broke through the embarrassment that for one long moment held silent the group who waited for Craven in the drawing-room at "TIMBERVALE." Craven himself, handsome, accustomed to bear himself with a proud, slightly affected dignity, had, however, dreaded this home-coming and the scenes it would of necessity involve. In him —hidden though it might be under the veneer of the man of the world—was a strain of that self-consciousness which so often belongs to genius. And years of aimless wandering, of living alone, apart from the haunts of men for long periods, had increased this tendency.

But John Gordon's hearty voice, the gracefulness with which he acknowledged the years of absence, the assurance with which he at the same time agreed to ignore them—as implied in his words and tone—struck exactly the note needed to set Craven at his ease.

"Jack, my boy," he responded. "It's good to see you—good indeed," and the two friends clasped hands.

"You scarcely look the vagabond you described yourself as being in your letter," was Gordon's smiling comment, as he scrutinised with slightly critical air the fashionably cut clothes, the close-trimmed beard, the well-groomed appearance in general of his old friend.

Craven laughed in response to the sally.

"You see me civilised, as it were. You should meet me when the wanderlust is upon me. My own valet would not know me—fortunately, at such times I leave him home."

But at this juncture Aunt Matilda decided that it was time to take a hand in the proceedings. In heavy black silk that seemed to encase her like armour, she came bustling forward. Craven greeted her with all deference, if just a trifle distantly. She had meant to kiss him, but this tall, bearded, very straight and stiff gentleman scarcely looked like good kissing material. So she remained satisfied with a hand-shake and merely said, very sedately—

"Welcome home, Richard, welcome home."

To which Craven replied gravely, "Thank you, Aunt Matilda." And at that moment his eyes lighted on Gerry. Gordon saw him go white, and almost he let him ask the question that had formed on his lips. Then, perceiving the mis-

take that was being made, he hastened to bring his boy forward.

"My son, Gerry," he said, with just a touch of excitement. "I suppose to him you will be Uncle Dick. Shake hands with Uncle Dick, my boy."

But the face of Craven was a study.

He took the boy's hand almost rudely, shook it and dropped it. He said nothing, but immediately turned away and opened up a new line of conversation with Gordon. There was a sudden tension in the atmosphere; Gordon resented his old friend's strange behaviour, not merely on his own account but because he saw its effect on the boy, who was used to affection and understanding and was nonplussed by the abrupt, incomprehensibly repellent manner of the newcomer.

Moreover, now Gordon also began to realise the real delicacy of the task yet confronting him. With each passing moment he was becoming more acutely conscious of the fact that in a room not far distant a small girl awaited his summons, and knowing the girl he also knew that her patience would probably stand little further strain.

He braced himself for the effort he must make.

"Dick," he began, "there is still one more introduction to be made."

"Yes?" It was plain that Craven had no intention of helping him. But there came a look

into his eyes that caused Gordon almost to wish that this man had held to his original intention of never returning.

"Gerry," bade Gordon, "tell Jean."

At that Craven drew a long breath. Then he took out a cigarette case, proffered it to Gordon, who refused it, and lighted a cigarette. And Gordon knew that the man was labouring under great nervous pressure. But there was little time for further observation or speculation: Jean and Gerry came into the room.

In her stiff white dress, with the big bow on her hair, and her small, expressive face, the eyes lighted by a wonderful look of expectancy that seemed to wait on the brink of some delightful experience, Jean seemed like a child who had slipped straight out of some beautiful picture. She had eyes and thought for none, however, save her father, and she never stopped till she stood immediately before him.

"I am Jean," she said then, and it seemed as if something within her, something over which she had no control, did the speaking. "You are my daddy, my own dear, wonderful daddy." With that her hands went up and she offered herself to her father's embrace.

But the tall man never stooped. Instead, he stepped backward, out of range of the outstretched arms.

"Who dared to call this child Jean?" he thundered.

At the sound of his voice Aunt Matilda quailed and Gordon felt a strong tide of anger surging in him.

"She is Jean's daughter and yours, Dick," he protested hotly. "Whose name should she have if not her mother's?"

"Jean's child"—Craven spoke as if to himself. Though he would not touch her, his eyes had never left her face. It seemed almost as if his resentment over her name had been assumed to cover some other, deeper emotion which he dared not reveal.

Then he gave a sudden, harsh laugh, that startled them all.

"Strange world," he averred. "I could have sworn a moment ago that my own pretty Jean had walked into the room. But it isn't she. I've remembered. She's dead, and I wish I were! I am rich, I am famous, but my heart is empty and my soul is filled with bitterness. There was only one Jean—there can never be another."

Then it was that Jean's self-possession gave way. With a sob she went to Gordon,

"Uncle Jack, he doesn't love me, he doesn't and he won't. Oh, Uncle Jack, I never knew people could hurt like that!"

Gordon did his best to soothe her, and Gerry, boyishly indignant, came forward.

"Never mind, Jean," he spoke up. "I love you and father loves you. And when we're bigger I'm going to marry you and we'll go away and be happy together. Don't cry, Jean, please don't cry," his own voice ready to break as he tried to comfort her.

Craven turned to Aunt Matilda.

"Will you tell me where my room is to be?" he asked, a trifle impatiently. "I'm tired after my journey, and besides, I dislike scenes."

Aunt Matilda beckoned him to follow her, and he excused himself to three people, none of whom even heard him.

At the door of his room they paused.

"You must take the girl away," he commanded harshly, "while I am here. I knew that it would do no good to meet her. She's Jean and she isn't Jean—Good God, can't you realise that I could never bear the sight of her near me?"

It was a characteristic defence, coming from a man who had never denied himself anything, and who had cursed sorrow instead of accepting and bearing it manfully. But the very fact that he made a defence at all showed that deep in his heart he was aware of the sin of selfishness that he was committing.

Aunt Matilda looked him square in the eye. For once she was not afraid of him.

"You are a brute," she stated succinctly. "Men like you don't deserve the consideration

of good women. This is your house, and to-morrow I shall leave it, and I shall take your little motherless and worse than fatherless Jean with me." With that Aunt Matilda gathered up her silk skirts and marched majestically away.

Inside his room, Craven sat down in a chair and held his head in both hands.

"Jean," he whispered. "Jean, come back to me, come back. God, I would give my soul to have Jean again!" It was the cry of a man who has already lost something of the best in him. Richard Craven was paying the price of his too selfish passion.

CHAPTER V

A FIGHT WITH THE BLUE DEVILS

HOWEVER, Aunt Matilda did not leave the house the next day. Several things happened to cause a change in her plans.

When she went back to the drawing-room after leaving her nephew, she found Gordon there alone.

"Where's Jean?" was her first question.

"I sent her away with Gerry," Gordon explained gloomily. "She's all cut up, poor child, and I thought she might be better if left alone with some one of her own age. She's a sensitive little thing—in that respect much like her mother—why can't Dick see it?"

"He can." Mrs. Craven's tone was curt. For an old lady usually so fussy, she was oddly calm. "I've told Richard that to-morrow I shall go away and take Jean with me." Aunt Matilda gave the announcement due weight by sitting down somewhat ponderously and spreading her skirts around her.

"You mustn't do that," Gordon broke in sharply. "Jean's home is here. She has a right

to it. A man who stays away thirteen years is legally dead; if any one must go it shall be Craven himself."

"And who's to tell him that?" asked Aunt Matilda, somewhat caustically.

"I'll tell him," declared Gordon; "I intend to have this thing out with him before either of us sleeps to-night."

"And what about my cheerful little dinner-party?" Aunt Matilda's bitterness might well be forgiven.

"Give Jean and Gerry their dinner in the study. Send Dick the usual summons; if he comes, try to be natural—or as natural as you can be—and if he doesn't come, we'll call back the children and have the dinner-party ourselves!"

Aunt Matilda rose, sighing wearily, "There are some people in this world," she declared, "who never grow too old to need a thorough thrashing. If some one would horsewhip that man upstairs he might yet have a chance of becoming human."

"And you recommend the job to me?" Gordon could not help smiling. "I really think, Aunt Matilda," he said mischievously, "that it would come much better from you."

"You may joke about it if you like," the old lady responded indignantly, "but either Richard Craven will behave himself like a gentleman while he's in this house, or one of us will have to go out of it!" And quite haughtily—with a manner

that caused her guest to laugh softly—she left Gordon to reflect upon this threat.

Meanwhile, Craven himself passed a bad hour and a half in his room. He could not sit still; he tried resting on the couch and gave it up; by turns he paced the floor and huddled himself up in a big arm-chair in front of the fireplace. As a matter of fact, he was an object for pity, could those who stood ready to judge him downstairs but have understood all that he felt.

The man was a mass of nerves—had been for years; the sorrow that had shattered him had left more than a deep scar; it had remained with him, an active torment. He could not forget it; he could not displace it.

For years, if the truth were told, he had been fighting the temptation to come back to his home, not for the sake of the ties there, but because he felt that he might be happier among the scenes of his memories than away from them. And he had made up his mind to one thing—if he could not find peace, he must end it all once and forever.

That then was the secret of his home-coming; to fulfil a purpose long hugged in his heart, but carefully guarded—unless there came with a return to the old surroundings surcease of this gnawing pain that was ever with him.

He had in reality looked forward to finding in this familiar place a sympathy that would give him fresh impetus to live. He had not found it.

Instead, he had realised almost from the first minute that the interest of his aunt and his old friend centred in one person only—in the child. They had done without him for so long that they had ceased to miss him—he came to them now as a stranger, and they accepted him with conditions; if he could or would show a natural affection for his daughter, they would count him one of them again—as the father of Jean. His pride rebelled against this open show of indifference, so poorly concealed under an effort to appear natural and unchanged.

Had the child been a boy—and there was again cause for disappointment—it would have been different. They would not have been at the same pains to shield a boy from the possible aversion of his father; they would not have bothered to put him forward as demanding affection and attention. But a girl—and a girl so like his dead wife—she demanded what on the instant he could not give, for every movement she made, every change of expression, was a fresh shock to him—his torturing memories paralysed him, left him numb and ineffective before this mite of a girl, whose power to disconcert him only served to fill him with wrath that fed on his hurt pride.

As he sat there Thomas, his valet, came into the room. With one look at his master he began quietly to unpack bags and lay out dinner clothes.

Thomas had his memories too, but they were not all sad ones.

How often had he helped his master to dress in this room in the old days! How often had a laughing face peeped in at the door and a saucy voice ordered the tardy one to make haste. Then there would be a scramble and to the victor would go the spoils—as the young husband took his meed of kisses from those rosy lips, and the little mistress of the house would declare merrily, "Don't, Dick,—you are shocking poor Thomas, and I know I am blushing."

And Thomas, with the privilege of the old and trusted servant, would smile his kind smile, for he loved the little lady only a little less than he loved his master, and like all who knew her, he loved to see her smile and hear her joyous laughter.

To-day Thomas had seen a ghost. But the effect upon him was very different from that upon his master. He had met Jean in the hall and had exclaimed in wonder, and Jean, knowing who he must be, had smiled brightly and had said, almost shyly, "How do you do?"

With the smile and the words Jean had sealed the fate of Thomas forever. He had nodded his grey head wisely and had whispered to himself, "Now all will be well."

But all was not well. He knew his master's moods and he recognised that he was in the thrall

of the blue devils. And only Thomas realised what this might mean.

Anxiously he hovered about his master's chair, not daring to approach him, but hoping that in some way his attention would be drawn away from himself and his thoughts. Had Thomas not been the faithful servant that he was he might have told some tales most certainly not to Dick Craven's credit about other periods when some such mood as this had held him—and he, less man than devil, had tried to find a refuge from his own torment by inflicting torment upon another. At such times Thomas had stood ready to die should his master's convenience demand it.

Then suddenly a gong sounded—the first call to dress for dinner. Craven started up—looking a trifle bewildered.

"You there, Thomas?" he asked.

The man hurried forward. His master let him help him into his evening things without a word. Not until he was fully dressed and the bell was summoning him below, did he open his lips to speak. Then he said,

"Get the key to the next room and unlock the door between. I shall not want you again tonight."

And Thomas bowed dumbly, hiding the fear in his eyes.

CHAPTER VI

JOHN GORDON TELLS CRAVEN WHAT HE THINKS

CRAVEN went down to dinner calm and entirely in control of himself. Just for an instant his eyes swept the dining-room half-defiantly. Then his relief manifested itself in the lift of his head, as he realised that only Gordon and Aunt Matilda were present.

The dinner passed off quietly. Gordon, ever anxious to avoid unpleasantness, began to draw Craven out on the subject of his books, his travels and his life generally. Craven, by nature an egotist, was easily tempted to monologue, and he could be, when he so desired, a quite brilliant talker. Even Aunt Matilda listened to him, for the time being fascinated.

But the day had been hard on Craven. His high-strung nervous organisation, with its extravagant emotionalism, had been put to a severe strain, and it was beginning to tell on him. By the time the salad was reached the three people at the table had grown strangely silent. In that silence all three began to remember what each had tried to forget.

It was therefore with relieved sighs, scarcely suppressed, that they rose from the table and went into the library, and hardly was Craven's coffee set before him when he had a cigarette lighted and was smoking away vigorously.

And then it was that he himself dispelled the atmosphere of constraint and spoke frankly.

"I suppose," he began, with a not altogether successful attempt at lightness, and addressing himself to Gordon, "that you, like Aunt Matilda here, think me a brute?"

Gordon puffed at his cigar. The moment for which he had waited was here, but he found it difficult to make the most of it. In a way, Craven had cut the ground from under his feet by opening up the subject in this casual, take-it-for-granted fashion. That was like Dick—to place an antagonist at a disadvantage and then make good his own position.

"Without a doubt," Gordon tried to state his case very carefully, "I was surprised and shocked at the attitude you took toward your daughter. For a man of intelligence you acted strangely and inexplicably, to say the least. Thirteen years ago your friends and your family over-looked a suggestion of madness on your part—making allowances for the provocation. But I must confess that it is hard to forgive your unjust treatment of a child who never asked to be born, but for whom you are directly responsible, and yet to-

ward whom you show a resentment out of keeping with all the laws of natural affection, and in every way opposed even to the most ordinary rules of good breeding.

"No, let me finish"—as Craven started to reply—"you asked me a question and I am answering it. By your own act you cut loose from your home and your child; you stay away for as long as it suits you to do so; suddenly, as the result of a whim, you pack up and come back, disturbing the harmony of a domestic establishment that has existed perfectly well without you, and introducing unhappiness into the heart of an innocent child, for no reason whatever other than that she happens to look like her mother."

"You put it most pleasantly, to be sure," Craven commented, with a touch of irony. "The long-lost friend and father is certainly being treated to a most enthusiastic reception on his return home."

"Your own fault," put in Gordon. "We were here to receive you with open arms. Your daughter wanted only your natural recognition of her claims as a daughter. Already she was in love with you—her little heart yearned for a small return of that love. You spurned her—did you expect those who care for you and her to look on with approving smiles at this spectacle of your

colossal selfishness? You have ignored the child, you have neglected her, and now you turn up to torture her."

Craven for once was silent. He was not an artist with a great creative imagination for nothing. As distinctly as if the thing were happening now he saw that appealing face lifted up to his and the hands reaching toward him. If only she had not been so like the first Jean! If she had been a boy,—but a girl, and the counterpart of his lost love!

"It's no use," he said in a dull tone. "My home-coming has not been a success. I'll grant I'm a selfish beast, but the eyes of Jean have haunted me for thirteen years—the sight of this child, with those same eyes, is more than I can stand. I do not ask your forgiveness. I will stay here for a few days and try not to make any further trouble. Then I will go—and this time it shall be for good, I promise you." His tone was ominous.

"No, Dick, no," protested Gordon, with quick compunction. "Take a few days to think it over. Meet Jean, and now and then try to talk to her. It may be that you will find yourself changing in feeling toward her. Perhaps you will get used to her, and then, who knows?—you may see things with different eyes."

"It seems to me," put in Aunt Matilda, looking over her spectacles and frowning sternly,

"that there's a matter of duty in this that you, Richard Craven, have overlooked. I was brought up to believe that fathers had to look after their children, whether they wanted to or not, and I don't know that there's been any change in that rule. It seems to me that a man who pretends to care so much for his wife that is gone has a funny way of showing it when he openly dislikes and ill-treats her child. What would Jean herself say if she sat here to-night? I can hear her pleading with you to love the child and be kind to her."

"Don't, Aunt Matilda," murmured Gordon. He had seen the dangerous light in Craven's eye. He sensed more trouble.

But Craven kept himself in hand admirably. He got up from his chair, bowed to Aunt Matilda, and gave Gordon his hand.

"I have made my explanation," he said quietly. "The day has been hard, and I am very tired. I beg leave to excuse myself and say 'Good-night.'"

And so he left them. The great day of his home-coming was over, and all that it had brought were dissension and discord and heartache.

Aunt Matilda, still quivering with indignation, looked at Gordon and he looked at her. Then he said,

"Never mind; wait."

"You really think it may come right?" Aunt Matilda inquired, a little hopefully.

"I'm sure it will. Let him alone; the place, with time and Jean, will do the rest."

In this way they tried to comfort each other, each hoping that the other might be right, yet both doubting the wisdom of their optimism.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEAR-TRAGEDY

JEAN woke very early on the day following her father's home-coming. She had gone to bed entirely miserable; she had cried herself to sleep in spite of the reassuring words of John Gordon, who came to bid her good-night before he and Gerry went home, and the really affectionate kiss—unusual for the undemonstrative Aunt Matilda—but which showed the little girl plainly how the hearts of those who loved her ached for her in this trouble, and proved the loyalty with which they all would stand by her in the face of her father's actions toward her.

"But, Uncle Jack," she had said, with a child's sure logic, "why should he dislike me so just because I look like my mother? Gerry's mother is dead, but you don't hate Gerry because of it?"

Whereupon Gordon tried to make clear to her something of the strangeness of her father's ways, and only succeeded in convincing her that by comparison he was much the nicer man, a thing he had no intention of doing, needless to say.

However, things always look different in the morning, and in spite of her tears, Jean had slept the healthy sleep of a normal child. She awoke to find the sun shining and the birds singing, and the things that had happened on the day before suddenly seemed to be the parts of a very bad dream.

She got up quietly and started to dress herself, all the while her brain busy with a plan which she had made almost upon waking. She would ignore the troubles of yesterday and would go to her father. Surely, he would be a little more glad to see her. Perhaps he was tired yesterday, and then, too, it had all been a shock to him. If she had been a boy and had looked a little less like that dear mother, he would not have felt so badly about it all.

She knew what she would do! Up in the attic there were some clothes of Gerry's; she would dress herself as a boy. Then she would brave the terrors of an unknown punishment and cut away her hair. She would be a boy, and perhaps then her father would be kind to her. In his beautiful book—which she loved, and which she wanted to ask him about so badly—there was a girl who dressed as a boy, and she would do the same. Somehow he must be made to love her or she would surely die of a broken heart; and once again the tears began to come to the surface and she had much ado to fight them back.

With Jean to think was to act. She slipped very quietly up the attic stairs, dug out the clothes she remembered to have helped put there herself during one or another of her and Gerry's escapades, and carried them down to her own room. As yet the house was asleep; she had no fear of intrusion. The scissors gave her some trouble; she had to go to the sewing-room for them, and then they were hard to find. But finally she had everything. Snip, snip went the curls, until her head was one mass of short, tight ringlets. These she tried to smooth down by brushing them with a wet brush, but the water only seemed to make them curlier. So she sighed resignedly and put on the short breeches, the loose blouse and the jacket of Gerry's suit. Fortunately, it was an old suit, which the boy had almost outgrown, and it really was not a bad fit on Jean. She found a red tie among her own things, and tied this in a rakish bow under her chin. She was proud of the result. She made a good-looking boy, and certainly there was a difference between this and the girl who was the image of her mother.

When she was all ready, Jean hesitated just for a minute. A sudden great fear seized her—once again she saw that handsome face looking down at her, those dark eyes fixed steadily on her, and heard the voice, with its ringing, "Who dared to call this child Jean?"

Then Jean sank on her knees at the bedside. "Dear God," she pleaded, "make my father love me, make him, make him. And make me a good girl so that he cannot help loving me, for Jesus's sake, Amen."

After that she felt better. She got up and slipped out of the room. She ran lightly down the corridor and around a corner, and there she faced the door of the room in which she believed her father to be sleeping. She leaned toward the door and listened. There came no sound from within. Then she put her hand on the knob; it turned—Craven had forgotten to lock it. Jean turned the knob again, and pushed the door ever so lightly. It opened and she looked into the room.

Beside the bed a night light was burning; the bed itself was in slight disorder, but there was no one in it. Jean went into the room and took another, longer look. Her father was not there. Then she noticed that the door into the next room was partly ajar. That was strange; she knew which room that was—it was the west room, in which her mother had died. She knew that Aunt Matilda usually kept it locked—she herself had been in it but twice. Perhaps her father, though, was there now. She tiptoed across the room and peeped in through the crack left by the half-open door. Then she stood transfixed with horror.

Richard Craven sat on the edge of the bed

where his wife had died. He was fully dressed, still in his evening clothes. His hair, however, was dishevelled, as if he had run his hands through it many times, and his eyes were bright with a wild light that made them look like the eyes of a madman. Jean, of course, was not able to analyse her impressions of that face and figure, but she did know that her heart almost stopped beating, and that she was gripped by a great fear. For in his right hand Richard Craven held a revolver, and even as his daughter looked, he raised it to his head. Jean waited no longer. A stronger will than her own sent her flying into the room.

"Daddy, daddy, don't," she cried, not knowing what she was saying. But her warning cry came too late; her little hands had grasped the weapon before the man on the bed had realised that the child was upon him; there was the sound of a shot, and Richard Craven woke from his stupor to see what looked like a boy's form lying in a huddled heap at his feet, and to realise that instead of killing himself he had probably killed some one else.

Instantly his senses came back to him. He dropped the gun and stooped over the little figure, and as he turned it over to lift it up, he recognised the face, and knew that it was Jean whose body had received the bullet. Then all at once his vision became clear, and his brain started to work like a piece of well-oiled mechanism. He carried

his daughter through the door, across his bedroom and into the hall, and as he went he called loudly, "Thomas, Thomas."

But there was no need to call. The shot had been heard by a household just awake and getting ready for the day's work. Into the hall crowded a group of frightened servants, and down the corridor came Aunt Matilda, her cap awry, her apron strings knotted in front, on her lips the question,

"What was that?"

But Craven had no time to explain.

"The doctor!" he cried. "How can we get him?"

"I'll call, sir," answered Louis, who seemed to have kept his head.

"Jean's room?" Craven turned to Aunt Matilda, and she, sensing rather than knowing the trouble, led the way.

They laid the child on the bed, and Craven made use of his small knowledge of surgery to stop the flow of blood from the wound in her breast. It seemed but a few minutes until the doctor entered the room. Whether or not Craven recognised him did not appear, but he was the same doctor who had helped to bring Jean into the world and whose quick measures had prevented Craven from doing terrible things when his young wife died. He had been a young man then; he was older now, and he had been Jean's friend all

her life. When he saw the little girl's sad plight his face went pale. But he set to work, silently, although the child's queer clothing had raised many questions in his mind, as it had in the minds of all who had seen her. Craven looked on, every muscle tense, his whole thought concentrated on what was being done. Once the child moaned, and Craven started toward her, but the doctor motioned him back.

At last, all that could be done was finished, and the child was resting quietly. Then the doctor beckoned Craven from the room and the two shook hands in the library after a separation of thirteen years.

Craven made his explanation of the accident in a frank way. He had intended suicide. All night he had waited for the courage. Then, just when he thought to do the deed, there had come an interruption, and before he could prevent it, the thing had happened, owing to the child's quick and unexpected movements. But one thing was sure—the tragedy had made a different man of him. No thought of suicide now—his whole mind was bent upon the problem of getting Jean well.

"The wound is not serious?" he asked.

"It is." The doctor did not hedge. It was no time for half-measures; Craven must be made to see how nearly his false pride and loss of self-command had brought him to murder. Doctor James knew nothing of the attitude that Craven

had taken toward the child, but that there was a mystery of some kind back of all this he felt certain.

Therefore, he told Craven plainly that the child was in a serious condition. He was going to send at once for two nurses and call in a specialist. Meanwhile, he would go back and stay within call for fear of some unexpected change.

Jean did not die. But she came so close to it that but for the will of her father and the combined efforts of the doctors and nurses she most certainly would have done so. There were hours when she seemed to be slipping away from them, with nothing to hold her back, but in those hours Craven proved himself a giant. Now or never must he undo the harm he had done, for by this time he understood the meaning of the boy's suit and the cropped hair, and all else faded into insignificance—Jean must live to know that he was ashamed; she must live to know that now, at last, her father loved her and wanted her.

CHAPTER VIII

JEAN COMES BACK TO LIFE

JEAN felt very tired—so tired that nothing mattered. Where she was, where she was going, who was there, or what might happen—it was all the same; she seemed to be drifting in space and she was content to go on drifting.

But presently she heard a voice, and it was calling her—calling her, it seemed, to come back. The voice seemed to come from a long distance off, and at first Jean scarcely heeded it. Then something in it rang familiar, and suddenly she knew that the voice was that of her father, and now she could understand what he was saying.

"Little Jean, don't go, don't dare to go! I need you, Jean; your father needs you."

It seemed very strange, but a faint curiosity began to stir in Jean. For the first time she wanted to know what was going on. Tired though she was, she made an effort and opened her eyes.

Just at first she could not see very clearly—then, gradually, out of the haze, several figures took shape. One, she saw, was Dr. James; yes, and there was Aunt Matilda, who was wiping her

eyes; and most wonderful of all, there was her father, and he was bending down close to her, his eyes fixed upon her. But he no longer stared at her as at something he could not bear the sight of; instead, his eyes were filled with anxiety and love and pleading. Jean thought she must be dead, for only in that way could she account for this change in her father. But then, surely they weren't all dead!

Just at that moment the doctor stepped forward and took her hand.

"Her pulse is stronger," she heard him say distinctly. And then she felt very sleepy again, and closed her eyes. But once more her father's voice held her.

"Don't go, Jean! Stay and love your old daddy." And a great content filled Jean; she moved her hand that was nearest her father a little, tired though she was. He must have seen it, for he clasped it in his own big, strong hand, and held it. Jean felt that she must let him know that she intended to stay with him, and so she pressed his fingers with what little strength she had. And she knew by his quick grip that he felt and understood the signal. After that she thought she might go back to her well-earned rest.

"She will get better," Dr. James told Richard Craven. "You have, I think, saved her life. I had given up hope of pulling her through. There is something mysterious in these sinking spells,

for she is naturally a strong child. I should say that she had suffered a severe shock of some kind of which this great weakness is the result."

"It's all right now, I think, doctor," Craven answered. "The child has been under a great strain, but I think the relief has come. Thank you for your goodness once again."

"And thank you for your help. I am very fond of Jean; it would have been a blow to me had anything happened to her."

Jean improved very gradually but surely. It took a little time for her to adjust herself to the new relations with her father. The first wounds had gone deep, and it required the best efforts of Craven to dispel the impressions of those early hours of his home-coming, when Jean had suffered such agonies of disappointment and sorrow because of his treatment of her. But he was game; even Aunt Matilda was forced to acknowledge that this was a new Craven, and Gordon was delighted to see the bond of affection and sympathy between the father and daughter being strengthened hour by hour and day by day.

And now the Spring was here, and Jean could hear the twittering of the birds in the big trees outside her windows. The sun was warm and merry; it greeted her with a smile each morning when she woke. She could see the leaf-buds bursting, and the tender green sprouts growing with

the hours, and she began to long for the woods and the river, the old haunts of herself and Gerry. Gerry was allowed to come in now every day, and he brought her once a basket of anemone, again a bunch of the earliest violets, another time a great, beautiful bough laden with snowy dogwood blossoms.

Then one day she was wrapped up carefully and carried in her father's arms to the big grey limousine that stood waiting, and she had her first ride in the wonderful car which seemed like some enchanted vehicle bound straight for fairyland. That was only the first of many such rides, the length of which increased as Jean grew stronger.

There came a day, however, when Richard Craven, satisfied that his daughter's health was no longer a matter for worry, felt the pull of the inspiration to go back to the new book he had started. And now Jean had a chance to see the author of "Ripe Wheat" at work, and one day, when he needed to have something copied in a hurry, she begged leave to do it. Her work was so satisfactory that he began to let her help him regularly, and soon he discovered that she was advanced mentally well beyond her years, in spite of the tomboy tendencies which began to assert themselves as soon as she was on her feet again.

Father and daughter became companions in all the best senses of the word. Craven took Jean to New York with him, and gave her a whole

stock of fresh experiences. He no longer strove to hide his identity, and soon there were people enough ready to do homage to the successful author.

Since his return home and Jean's accident, Craven had improved in every way. His nerves were steadier; he retained in a measure his old habit of biting sarcasm, and now and then his whims were a trial to the household, but on the whole he proved himself courteous and considerate, while his generosity was a revelation. The people at "TIMBERVALE" had never lacked for anything during his absence, but John Gordon had a streak of Scotch thriftiness that led him to administer the estate left in his hands with great care. Richard Craven, with the money he had made, brought a new atmosphere into the old house; Aunt Matilda had never had so many nice things, while her father insisted that Jean be fitted out with everything of the best. What he could not show in affection he demonstrated through gifts, and Jean and Gerry were the chief recipients of his bounty.

For, lacking a son, for which he no doubt had felt a real longing, Craven took Gerry as a substitute, and it was only a short while until John Gordon realised that his old friend had already made a definite plan regarding the futures of Jean and Gerry.

One day Craven was called to New York hur-

riedly on a matter connected with a play he was writing, and when he came home he brought with him a big, beautiful collie dog. At this time Jean and Gerry were studying certain branches together, and they had been reading "The Lady of the Lake." When Jean wondered what they should call the collie, Gerry had an inspiration.

"Let's name him Roderick Dhu, after the Highlander," was his suggestion, and Jean acquiescing, Roderick Dhu he became. In this way another member, and a very important one, was added to the household, somewhat to Aunt Matilda's disgust, but greatly to the satisfaction of Jean, who was a natural lover of all animals. However—

"What with the book-writing and the automobile riding, and the travelling around, and those two youngsters allowed to do everything they please, this house is surely turned topsy-turvy; I don't seem to get a chance even to knit." So Aunt Matilda confided to her best friend, Mrs. Holden, one afternoon at the tea-table. "But Richard is very good to me," she supplemented, "and so I don't have much cause really for complaint." Whereat she showed, with no small pride, a handsome pin with which Craven had presented her after his last trip to the city.

CHAPTER IX

THE CRAVENS MEET RAYMOND HEATH

THE years went by, and Jean Craven, now seventeen years old, had developed into a charmingly graceful, sweet-faced, self-possessed little lady, with a mind of her own, a strong will, and a tendency to indulge in extremes of emotion and apathy. No doubt Jean missed the companionship of those of her own age, but she concealed this carefully, realising that her father loved her with that jealous type of love which could ill-brook any rivalry. Her feeling for her father was a mixture of frank love and as frank impatience, and yet she showed him a devotion that had served to keep him contented and satisfied for four years. In that time, it is true, the desire to break away again had seized him on at least two occasions, and only the tie that bound him to his daughter had prevented him from taking to the road. On both those occasions he had compromised with himself by going abroad, Jean with him, and in Europe he had renewed some old acquaintances, had made some new ones, and had worked off his surplus of nervous energy by

mountain climbing and extensive walking-tours through England and France.

Jean enjoyed travelling; she too made some friends. And it was one of these friendships which presently threatened her peace of mind, her future happiness and her relations with her father.

Richard Craven had not grown less selfish with the years. Continued success had fed his vanity, and the sweet devotion of a beautiful daughter had given him a satisfaction that only served to enhance his self-esteem. He had guarded Jean very carefully; had kept her from school, educating her through private teachers entirely, and discouraging the mingling with other girls, and more particularly with boys or young men. At "TIMBERVALE" they did little or no entertaining; in New York they now and again had a little theatre or dinner-party, and in Europe they accepted here and there a small share of the hospitality so generously offered them. But John Gordon remained their only frequent guest at home, with the addition of Gerry during his holiday periods, for he was now at college.

It was obvious to all save Jean perhaps that Richard Craven hoped one day to welcome Gerry as his son-in-law, but he intended to keep Jean to himself for so long as he saw fit. Gerry, too, had his dreams, but as yet Jean seemed so wholly

heart-free that he had not dared even to hint at his dearly cherished ambition.

Perhaps time and propinquity would have brought about the materialisation of this plan of Craven and Gerry for the future happiness of Jean, if Raymond Heath had not chanced to burst an automobile tire on the road to Barton Mills and almost ditched his machine through a bad skid, thus meeting Richard Craven and Jean as they walked through beautiful old Suffolk in the days of a wonderful summer abroad, content with themselves and the world, and planning a new book between them.

"A fine mess I'm in," Heath burst out with, as the man and the girl started to go past him.

"Haven't you an extra tire?" inquired Craven.

"No, I had a blow-out only a few miles away and I changed the tire and left the damaged one at a garage down the road to be fixed. I suppose I'll have to walk back and get the garage people to bring it out here when it's fixed and put it on."

"We're walking that way," Craven offered courteously. "Perhaps we can be of service?"

In this time Jean had said nothing, but she had looked at Heath out of a pair of big, candid, grey eyes with a curiosity that had not been lost upon the youth.

"I think I'd better walk back," he decided. "The car will be all right here until I return, but if you don't mind my going on with you it will

make the way seem shorter," and he bowed slightly toward Jean.

"You are an American." Craven stated rather than asked.

"Yes, I come from Brooklyn. I've been over for three months and bought this little car with an idea of making a trip through Scotland. I've usually spent my summers on the Continent and I hope to go there later."

"We, too, love the Continent—two summers ago we took a walking tour through France, but this time we thought we would try England."

It was Jean who volunteered this information, and the young man gave her a keen glance, born of wonderment over the perfect air of detachment with which she spoke, evincing a complete absence of coquetry or effort to attract special attention.

"My name, by the way," said the stranger, "is Heath—Raymond Heath."

"And mine is Craven," answered Richard Craven, "and this is my daughter, Jean."

The two young people formally acknowledged the introduction, and then the three went on together, talking as they went, until in about a half-hour's time they came to the garage where Heath had left his tire. The Cravens were about to bid the young man good-day when Heath turned suddenly to Craven.

"Mr. Craven," he said, "I beg your pardon,

but I've remembered where I last saw your face —you are 'Richard Dale,' are you not?"

Craven admitted that that was his pen-name, and Heath eagerly grasped his hand.

"I try to write myself," he said with a self-conscious smile. "For the past year I've been editing the book page of the *Brooklyn American.* I know your books, sir, and I admire them deeply."

Craven bowed his thanks, and Heath went on,

"Why not go a little way with me?" he asked. "Let me get this tire fixed and bring the machine back for you. There's some bully scenery hereabouts, and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to take you about a bit."

"Oh, father, let's do that," spoke up Jean. There was something in this good-looking cosmopolitan young man that had attracted Jean. She was quite willing to further her acquaintance with him.

And so it came about that for a period of a week the Cravens rode in Heath's car, and Jean and Heath became more and more interested in each other. But one day Craven woke up to the fact that the two young people were proving rather oppressively congenial. That night he made an excuse to break up the party, and he and Jean started back to London. But the damage was done. Heath's last words to Jean, in a moment stolen for leave-taking, were,

"You'll write me to this address, won't you?" handing her a card, and she promised without hesitation, giving him her own address at "TIMBERVALE."

In London a cablegram awaited Craven. It was from John Gordon and told of Aunt Matilda's sudden death. The news made Jean very sad and depressed her father not a little. That night they talked of the kindness and smiled together in an affectionate way over the little eccentricities of the good old lady.

"Poor, dear Aunt Matilda," said Jean. "She never could understand the characteristics of the house of Craven. I think she often wondered how she ever came to marry one of them in the first place."

"I wondered that myself a good many times," replied Craven. "For as I recall Uncle William he was one of the queerest of the lot."

"But Aunt Matilda was very kind-hearted in spite of her fussy little ways. Sometimes I have been astonished to see how patient she could remain in the face of all the petty difficulties of managing the household and me."

"I have a suspicion that in the final analysis Aunt Matilda was very fond of you. In a way you were her baby, and though she hated to show it, she had a motherly instinct which found its only expression in what she was able to do for you."

"The old house will be very different without her, father," sighed Jean. "I am sorry that we could not be there to comfort her before she died. I wish that Uncle Jack's letter would come soon, so that we might know all about it."

The letter came in due time, but it said that Aunt Matilda's death had been very unexpected and very quiet; a hard-working body worn out had simply given up the struggle. Gordon added his tribute to the old lady in words that were full of respect and affection.

And so Great-Aunt Matilda became a memory, and as a memory her peculiarities were forgotten and only her qualities of good-heartedness recalled. Like a great many people she was better loved dead than she ever had been living.

CHAPTER X

JEAN HAS A BIRTHDAY

ON the morning of her eighteenth birthday Jean was awakened by Roderick Dhu, the pet collie, who, as a privileged member of the family, often came to her room and thrust his moist muzzle up against his young mistress's cheek until she opened her eyes.

"Hello, Roddy," Jean said sleepily, and put out a lazy hand to stroke his head. At the same moment she heard a voice outside her door saying,

"Come, lazy-bones, get up. This is your birthday, and a surprise package waits you on the lawn!"

"On the lawn? Oh, dads, dear, why on the lawn?"

"Well, come and see. Even Rod there knows more about how to celebrate birthdays than you do."

Presently a dainty figure crossed the hall, tripped down the stairs with the big dog ahead of her, and stepped out on to the wide veranda. Craven rose from a chair to bestow his morning

kiss upon her, and waved an airy hand toward the big elm-tree halfway down the drive. There Jean saw Jack, the stable boy, standing beside a beautiful little black mare, and at the sight she clapped her hands gleefully.

"Not mine, father darling?" she asked, and when he answered with a nod and a smile, she ran down the steps and over the lawn to where Jack bowed and scraped, his tan cheeks flushed with real pleasure to see his young mistress so happy.

"Oh, the black beauty!" Jean exclaimed. "That's just what I'll call her, and maybe she'll be something like the Black Beauty of the book —in disposition, at least. Isn't she a dear? And may I ride her, Jack?"

"Yes, miss, when she has been saddled. Mr. Craven said that I shouldn't spoil her beauty by putting a saddle on till you had seen her, miss."

"Poor thing. I wish she didn't have to be saddled. I think I'd like to learn to ride saddleless."

Jack smiled, and Craven came sauntering up.

"Meet with your approval, little lady?" he asked quizzically.

"Oh, father, it was good of you to think of this. I have so wanted a horse of my own."

"Wouldn't rather have had that little runabout you so admired last week?"

"No, indeed. I can love a horse; one can scarcely love an automobile. Besides, there are

enough automobiles in the family!" she concluded archly, and Craven frowned. For he knew that she referred to Raymond Heath and the small car Heath delighted to speed in.

At the breakfast table a cloud arose to mar the sunshine of happiness in which the household basked. When the mail was brought in there were two letters for Jean, and Craven looked up inquiringly. Jean opened them, her face flushing slightly, and only too conscious of the fact that her father's eyes were upon her, read first one and then the other through.

"Gerry writes that he cannot come," she vouchsafed finally.

"How's that?" asked Craven, obviously disappointed.

"His work has been very hard and he had a setback due to a slight illness last week."

"Which isn't the real reason at all," declared her father. "What's wrong with you and Gerry, Jean?"

"Nothing, father."

"You're not telling the whole truth, my daughter. I've known for some time that you and Gerry were on the 'outs' and I don't like it, that's all. What about Heath? I suppose the other letter is from him?"

"Yes," Jean could not keep the tiny note of

exultation out of her voice. "He's coming, of course."

"Of course. He's the kind you can't lose."

"Father, don't. I asked him to come."

"Yes, without deference to my wishes. Jean, answer me straight—are you in love with Heath?"

Jean hesitated.

"I'm not sure, father. I like him immensely. In fact, the more I see of him the better I like him. I think I'm going to love him."

Craven groaned.

"And Gerry?"

"I've told Gerry that I cannot marry him, father. I have played with Gerry all of my life. He is a dear, big brother to me. He thinks he loves me, but I doubt it myself. If I refuse to marry him he will soon find some one to take my place. Gerry knows that you and his father have your hearts set on our marrying, and Gerry is always anxious to please. That's my biggest objection to him. If I married him, he would never cross me in anything—I should have my own way absolutely; we should live a dull, prosaic life, have numerous babies, and that would be the end of both Jean and Gerry. No, father, I must keep my own individuality. For too many years I grew up without any real guidance; I like to think and act for myself. And always, until this matter of Gerry came up, you let me do that. Is it

quite fair to try to persuade me against my will to marry a man I know I shall never be quite happy with? Your heroines, father, don't act that way, you know."

Craven was beaten and he knew it. But Craven hated to be beaten. It was likely to make him ugly. He and Jean had rarely quarrelled in the years of their acquaintance; but then, few matters calling for a real difference of opinion had arisen. Now he began to perceive that he had lacked foresight in giving this girl her head, since on the first real issue between them she quite calmly defied him. He knew that Jean loved him with a deep affection, but he also knew that Jean inherited his own faculty for character analysis. He had never fooled her with regard to his shortcomings; the daughter who had suffered so terribly at his hands had never forgotten, and probably would never forget.

"Well," he commented, in a not very promising tone, "before you decide to marry that saphead Heath, just let me know."

He half expected Jean to be angry at his words, but instead, she laughed lightly, and, springing up, came over to where he sat.

"Dear, jealous old Daddy," she said gaily. "He mustn't be angry on his daughter's birthday. Especially when he gave her that wonderful Black Beauty out there. You know, father dear," she continued quite seriously, "you have

spoiled me, and some day I suppose you're going to have to pay for it."

But neither Jean nor Craven realised for an instant how full of prophecy those words might be. Else they might both have paused before taking the next step which was to end for them so disastrously.

CHAPTER XI

THE WAY HEATH WON

AT four Jean, mounted proudly on Black Beauty, rode out of the gates of "TIMBERVALE," and let the little mare trot briskly toward the main road. In a very short time she saw the object for which she was looking coming swiftly toward her. She purposely took the middle of the road, and Raymond Heath, driving his little runabout furiously hard, saw the girl he had determined to win for his wife, with her dark hair flying, her cheeks rosy, and her eyes alight with mischief, seated daintily on the back of a beautiful black horse, and waving her tiny whip in a mock-serious gesture for him to stop.

As he slowed up, almost directly in front of her, she laughed merrily, and cried,

"Your fine for speeding, sir!"

The challenge was more than Heath could stand. He leaped out of the machine and went up to the horse.

"Your fine is ready," he declared. "Your hand, fair lady."

Jean's hand went out, and he kissed it, nor would he let it go.

"I suppose you know that you are in the middle of the road, sir?" she inquired demurely.

"Hang the road," he exclaimed. "I want a real kiss."

But Jean was not ready for his impetuous love-making. This young man fascinated her; in her heart she knew that she loved him, but she was not ready to make full confession of it.

"Don't be ridiculous, Raymond," she now said. "Come, get into the machine and drive slowly. I came out to meet you, you know. And also, you haven't said a word about my birthday present."

Heath saw that it would not do to rush matters, and so he did as she said.

"The horse is the birthday present?" he queried. "From father, I suppose?"

There was a hint of antagonism in the tone of that last question which did not escape Jean. She answered, with spirit,

"Yes. Father is always too good to me. This was unexpected and I am very much pleased."

That night John Gordon and Heath were the only guests at dinner. Gordon was a little quiet, and Craven was markedly in a bad humour. It took all of Jean's tact to keep the conversation flowing along lines that would admit of no controversy. Nor did Heath do much to help her.

Spoiled boy that he was, he had made up his mind to have this girl, in spite of the opposition which he knew that he would encounter. He was alone in the world and had been for some years, and he had played havoc with his never very large fortune. The fact that Jean would one day be rich did not detract from the general satisfaction that he felt when he realised that he was in love with her. And the prospect of a merry little fight for her appealed to his imagination. He did not take Richard Craven's opposition too seriously. But then he did not know Richard Craven, or even at this late hour he might have retreated from the field.

After dinner was over the men went to the drawing-room, and presently Jean joined them there. She found her father engaged in the recital of reminiscences that could be of real interest only to Gordon, while Heath's impatient waiting for her to appear was obvious. In a few moments the two young people had succeeded in withdrawing themselves from the immediate vicinity of the older men, and soon they managed to escape entirely, under the pretext of observing a night-blooming Cereus in the development of which Jean was greatly absorbed. But no sooner had they reached the greenhouse than Heath threw all pretence to the winds, and put his arm boldly around Jean:

"I have waited as long as I can wait for that

kiss you'll have to give me, little girl. Come, tell me that you love me as you know I love you, and that you will be my wife very soon."

Then as Jean hesitated, though she made no attempt to escape from his embrace, he went on:

"I've been mad about you ever since we met in England. I know that your father doesn't like me, and I know too that my prospects are not very wonderful for a girl who can have saddle horses and practically anything else that she wants, but life won't be worth living if I can't have you," he concluded desperately.

"To be perfectly truthful, Raymond," Jean answered very softly, "I was not sure until to-day that I loved you—at least enough to want to be your wife. Father will make things hard for us, I know, but if you are willing to take the chance of his being very angry, I will promise to marry you."

That was enough for Heath. He took her in his arms and kissed her, not once but many times, and with a passion that frightened the girl and yet aroused an almost equal ardour in her. There was no chance for words; his lips sealed hers, over and over and over again. In the years to come those passionate kisses were to remain with Jean a bitter-sweet memory. In the midst of the deepest agony she was to feel them all over again. For if ever Heath really loved her it was in those moments, during the first hour of

his knowledge that he was to possess her, when the madness of romance held him enthralled and the prospect of having to fight for her awoke the primitive man in him.

It was Jean who first came back to the realities of the situation.

"Raymond," she whispered, "you must not, dear, you must not. Father will be wondering where we are and he will surely be put out about it."

"Who cares about father now?" Heath inquired flippantly, and went back to the task of stilling her voice with more kisses. But Jean was nervous now; she had a foreboding that the sweets of love-making could not last forever; she spoke determinedly.

"Raymond, dear, we must go now. It is almost time for you to be returning to town. You can come again, very soon, and then I will be able to tell you what father says."

"What father has to say he will have to say now," Heath declared, with a great show of bravery. "I'm going back to him and tell him that you have promised to marry me. If he gives his blessing well and good—if he doesn't I'll bring the car out on a dark night and run away with you."

Jean laughed, just a little hysterically. She liked the way he took the situation in hand; she believed it to be a sign of courage; she regarded

it as a symbol of the chivalry with which he would always shield her from harm or difficulty. She let him have his way, and they returned to the drawing-room, where John Gordon was just about to say good-night. He had not been feeling well and he had orders from Dr. James to go to bed early. He looked tired and worried; had Jean not been absorbed in her own affairs she would have known that he was grieving. He spoke to her very tenderly, but, with the disregard of youth, she gave him a merry good-bye and watched him depart without so much as the shadow of a regret.

The reckoning came then. Heath told Richard Craven frankly that he loved his daughter and that Jean loved him and had promised to marry him. And Craven swore, as only Craven could swear.

"If she marries you she shall be no daughter of mine," he cried in a passion. And then he knew that he had said the wrong thing. Jean became icily calm and determined. She would marry Heath or no one, and at the first opportunity she would marry him in spite of all opposition. Heath looked at her bright eyes and red cheeks and wanted her more than ever. And he left, after a while, with the assurance that he would get this girl because she herself had willed that it should be so.

CHAPTER XII

JEAN'S REBELLION

JEAN married Heath.

Craven stormed and threatened. She should never see him again; she should be outcast from "TIMBERVALE"; she should not inherit a cent of his wealth, and if her marriage turned out to be a failure she need look for no help or sympathy from him.

Jean waxed sarcastic; her words lashed her father's fury to raging point, but she was a match for him in cold, biting sarcasm. And yet, being a woman, she pitied him, and pitied herself. There were moments when she wished that she had not taken this step; when she wished that she had made Heath wait and had tried to win her father. But the step taken, she would not turn back.

John Gordon came to "TIMBERVALE," and with the trouble at its height, tried to counsel both of them. He tried to make Jean see that she was perhaps acting precipitately; he tried to make Craven realise that he was unjust to take the view that if his daughter insisted upon choosing a husband not pleasing to him, he might

at will cast her out of his life and filch all her rights from her.

Gordon felt a certain constraint in doing all this, for he was, as he knew only too well, an interested party. He loved Jean and he wanted her for a daughter; in his heart, he was hurt that she should have set Gerry aside with such complete finality. Fairness, however, demanded that she be given her chance.

Gerry himself put in an appearance. Loath as he was to interfere with Jean in anything that she wished to do, still Gerry felt a certain responsibility. His father might be prejudiced, but he knew that his father was just, and when John Gordon said that he did not believe that Raymond Heath would ever amount to much, Gerry experienced a flash of rage that was new to him. He wished now that he had made an opportunity to know Heath; or that he had made a greater effort to outrival him.

With Gerry, Jean was very sweet and almost tender. After all, he was her true friend, and none knew it better than she did. If she could have loved Gerry how different everything would have been! But did Gerry love her? Jean doubted it. He had a deep affection for her, one that would never waver; he would make an ideal husband, she knew; but between her and Gerry, with his goodness, his fineness of character, his unselfish devotion to her, came the handsome,

carefree, devil-may-care face of Raymond Heath, and the thrilling recollection of his wonderful kisses. The possibilities of that unknown and untried world of romance, where passion entreats and compels passion, had caught and held the imagination of Jean, as it has caught and held the imagination of countless other girls and women, and she found herself ready to risk all for the sake of realising some at least of those possibilities.

It was not Raymond Heath with whom Jean was in love; it was a wonderful, unknown lover, in whose stead Heath stood, and into whose semblance Jean had converted Heath for her own delectation. Heath had come at the psychological moment, that was all, and he had made the most of his opportune arrival. But Jean alone was ignorant of this fact, and yet Jean alone could have saved herself from her folly. Her father's anger could not save her; it but stiffened her purpose. Craven at his worst only aroused the worst in his daughter. She was no longer a child begging his love of him; she knew him as he did not know himself; in her heart were hidden memories that now came forth as ghosts to haunt her and to drive her on and away from him.

What did she owe her father, after all? He had made her miserable in childhood; then he had petted and spoiled her; and had given her her own way when her way did not conflict with his.

But at the first hint of disagreement between them, he was the Richard Craven of five years ago —the harsh, selfish man, who would not brook denial; who defied the powers of earth and of Heaven, and who would not permit any voice to speak save his own.

Why did he want her to marry Gerry? Because he had planned things that way. He was fond of Gerry; Gerry was to him as the son he had not had. He wanted Gerry for his heir; he wanted Gerry to father his grandsons. It was not her welfare to which he looked—even though the way of Gerry might be the safe way, after all—but he wanted his whim satisfied, and he must learn that the world would not wait on his whims.

So Jean, with all the arrogance of youth, analysed the situation and her father's part in it. Of her own part she could see little—she was a girl emotionally afire under the spell of a lover's first kisses.

And so, in spite of threats and anger and pleadings, Jean packed her things, and went to New York. There she met Heath and they were married.

Craven let her go; indeed, in the end, he almost drove her from him. After which he shut himself up in his house to keep company with that Devil which opposition, whether from God or man, invariably aroused in him.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW CRAVEN WENT BACK TO THE ROAD

FROM the outside no one would have guessed that a tragedy of soul was being enacted within the old stone walls of the house at "TIMBERVALE." The Spring sun shone brightly in a deep, blue sky; the trees waved their young green leaves in greeting to the passing breezes, and the garden went on making its new gown for Summer irrespective of the possibility that a garden in a new dress might not be wanted when the Summer came.

It was six months since the daughter of the house had taken the law into her own hands and had left her home and her father to follow the call of her heart. In those months the master of "TIMBERVALE," like a peeved Achilles, sulked in the privacy of his deserted home, striking terror to the hearts of his servants, and keeping his few friends in a state of constant worry over his rapid changes of mood, which were often as pathetic as they were exasperating.

For now Craven knew how deeply he had come to love the child who had been restored to him,

or to be more precise, to whom he had restored himself. He knew now how his need of her was already beginning to make life a problem to him, and yet his false pride, his exaggerated arrogance, would not permit him to seek her out or give her an opportunity to seek him. He had said that she would henceforth be as dead to him, and he would not take back that word of finality even to gain peace of mind for himself. She had defied him—that was the sin of Jean, which sin he could not forgive her. There were moments when he could have killed Heath, had his son-in-law been within reach, but he retained enough reason to know that such action would not bring him any real comfort.

And now a new fear began to gnaw away at his heart. After Jean had gone, and he had indulged in a real fit of depression for a week or more, he had set to work to try to forget his trouble in writing a new book. But the book made no progress; nothing seemed to go right—he began to believe that his hand had lost its cunning, and he had a vision of himself, a man growing toward the prime of life, without kith or kin, his pride broken by sorrow, his self-respect gone through the loss of the talent that had made him hold his head high; and the question again began to ask itself, "Is it worth while to go on with the struggle?"

Then came the day when he realised that there

was one thing that might soothe the turbulence of spirit that was making a wild, restless, tortured creature of him. It had served before, when the world looked dark and hopeless, to bring him back to a normal frame of mind; it had put new life into him physically; it had cleared his brain of the shadows, and had quickened him to inspiration. He began to see the open road, with the hot dust flying; to feel the cool air of the mountain winds blowing the fragrance of wild-flowers into his nostrils; he began to hear the purling of the brooks and the hum of the locusts and the bees busily at work in the fields; he knew once more the exaltation of a battle with a storm in some lonely, wind-swept valley, where the roaring of the thunder sent the echoes flying and the lightning flashed through a dark sky above the heads of ancient, sheltering trees.

What were money and servants and a comfortable house? Barriers to soul-growth, that was all. The place for the spirit to play free was the open world; close to Nature man might learn the only secrets worth knowing, might live his life unchecked by petty, mysteriously necessary conventions. What did he, Richard Craven, owe the world of men? What did he owe his friends? —bereft of family, he was alone as a man can be alone only when the tide of natural affection has been diverted away from him, and he has to go to

strangers to get that which his own have withheld.

All the bitterness that had poisoned his soul when an unknown but all-powerful force had taken his wife from him, filled Craven once again. He saw through a mist, like a man going blind, and the scenes around him became first trivial, then hateful. There came a moment when the temptation to dismiss his servants, get rid of everything living in his house, and then put a match to the place almost overcame him. In his mind's eye he could see the conflagration, and could hear himself laughing exultantly all the while, like a demon who has accomplished some fiendish purpose.

He lived for many hours with this nightmare ever-present before him; then Nature interposed and demanded sleep. And with his waking came the reaction; the thing he had come near to doing when the temptation was upon him, became a matter of insignificance.

He went to Gordon and told him of what he at last determined upon. He was going to pack at once a few of the things he needed. Gordon should get rid of the servants, the automobile and the horses; close the house up and leave it so. He would hear from Craven later, when he had had time to adjust himself, to make up his mind as to what he wanted to do. Until he notified him Gordon was to have no address, and so

no mail could be forwarded. He would do as he had done before—he would take a sum of money sufficient for his needs for some time, and would send word if he wanted more.

He insisted on making a new will, leaving all that he possessed to Gerry.

"Gerry won't take it," declared Gordon. "What's the use of being so bitter? What you have is Jean's; you may withhold it from her while you live, but it is hers by right if you die."

"She shall never have it. If Gerry won't take it, it shall go to charity. I have no daughter."

Gordon knew that it would be useless to argue. They shook hands like two men who were parting casually for a few days, or at the most, a few weeks. But in the heart of each was a premonition that this was a parting that would be for a very long time, and yet, so far away from each other had they grown in spirit that both regarded the farewell almost with indifference. To Gordon, the ways of Craven were inexplicable; to Craven, there was offence in Gordon's unconcealed thought for Jean's welfare as being of far more importance than Craven's own racked emotions.

It was scarcely later than dawn on a lovely Spring morning when the vagabond emerged from the house at "TIMBERVALE." He was no more Richard Craven—he was leaving his name, his station, his every human tie behind him. He

had not dared to tell Thomas of what he meant to do; and yet he knew that somewhere Thomas would wait for him, and he had seen to it that the faithful valet was well provided for.

In a rough tweed suit, tan boots and a limp slouch hat jammed down upon his head, Richard Craven took up his stick and walked out of his home to become a wanderer once more.

He could hear the birds singing, and in the fields not far distant the cattle were lowing. In the chicken yard it sounded as if it were meal-time. Craven did not go in that direction, but he did make his way very quickly around the house to the stable. There he stopped at Black Beauty's stall, and putting out a hand, stroked the little mare's head very gently. She had been his last gift to Jean, and Jean had loved her, though she had had little chance really to use her. Now she would be sold—he began to wonder how Jean would feel if she knew. And a tear fell on Black Beauty's neck, a man's tear, forced from him by a nearly breaking heart.

As quietly as he had come he left the stable and turned down a path toward a gate that opened into a back road. It was just as he opened the gate that he heard a short bark, and turning, found Roderick Dhu at his knee. And the pleading in the dog's mournful eyes—mournful with appeal since Jean had gone—went to Craven's heart as few things could have done.

"Come, old chap," he said, stooping to pat the faithful head. "Come, you shall go with me and keep me company, and now and then we shall talk of Jean."

At that name the dog pricked up his ears and gave a happy bark. And as the Vagabond went through the gate the big collie went with him—they had elected to be companions of the road.

In the meantime Gerry came home for a short stay with his father, and heard the story of Craven's decision. With the easy confidence of youth, he did not take the matter too seriously.

"In a little while he'll forget it," he said reassuringly. "Then he'll be ready to make a new will. Jean'll have a baby and Uncle Dick will take a notion to see it, and it'll be the same old story over again. Uncle Dick either hates people desperately or he loves them desperately. He never knows how to take a middle course in anything."

"Well," said John Gordon, a trifle sadly, "I hope it will work out all right. I wish that we would hear more of Jean; I'd like to know that she is happy."

"She ought to be," Gerry commented, with just a tinge of bitterness. "She got what she wanted, didn't she?"

"Yes, but what people want is not always what

it is best for them to have. Jean is, after all, a Craven," his father replied.

"And Cravens will be Cravens, you mean, Dad?" Gerry asked, with a smile.

But John Gordon did not smile. His heart was heavy; his love for Jean made him ache for the assurance that no suffering consequent upon her wilfulness would come to spoil her youth and self-reliant spirit.

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CHAPTER XIV

WHAT HAPPENED TO JEAN

JEAN was having her first experience of real heartache.

After their marriage, she and Heath had taken an apartment in upper New York. At first Heath laughed to scorn the idea that Richard Craven really meant what he said when he vowed to have nothing more to do with his daughter.

"He'll come around all right, don't you worry," he told Jean, and Jean, in the first joys of married life, with her husband always beside her and so far showing toward her only the most passionate devotion, put "TIMBERVALE" out of her thoughts, and consigned to the future the problem of bringing her father to a different frame of mind.

But now and then a wave of homesickness would sweep over her, and a longing to know how the master of "TIMBERVALE" fared would tempt her to try Fate and go out to visit her old home. Here, however, Heath had a word to say; he counselled waiting a while longer, and in the end they waited until it was too late.

There came the day when Jean knew for sure that there would be a baby, and now her wish to see her father and to let him know the good news would brook no further denial. She sat down and wrote John Gordon a letter, in which she asked if he thought she might risk going to "TIMBERVALE." The letter reached Gordon only a few days after Craven had left, and it became his unpleasant task to reveal to Jean her father's final attitude.

To do this Gordon went to the city and called on Jean. She was delighted to see him; was anxious to know about Gerry, but had much ado to conceal the real anxiety that was eating away at her heart. Gordon, for his part, was pleased to see her looking so well, was reassured as to the matter of her happiness with her husband, and was therefore a little less careful in his method of breaking the news about her father than he might otherwise have been. And very soon he regretted his frankness, for at the word that Craven had left "TIMBERVALE" without any message hinting at reconciliation with his daughter, Jean went white; her hands trembled, and for the first time in her life she fainted away. Heath came in to find Gordon in a terrible state over what had happened, casting about helplessly for some one to tell him what to do, and almost sobbing in his relief when he saw the young husband appear in the doorway.

The explanation of the situation came while Jean was gradually recovering, and Heath was at no pains to conceal his contempt for his father-in-law's action. At the same time it was clear even to Gordon that Heath himself was upset by the news, but the young man was careful not to show this too plainly, and Gordon, his thoughts absorbed in Jean, passed it by without comment. Heath, meanwhile, took measures to restore his wife; was apparently very tender with her, and even went so far as to explain her sudden indisposition on the grounds of the coming event. To Gordon, of course, this was enough, and when Jean had once again become her normal self, he went away, well content that things were going prosperously with the young people, and believing that time and circumstances would probably restore matters to their proper basis.

That same evening, however, Jean and Heath had their first quarrel. To Jean it was plain that her husband was bitterly disappointed, very much chagrined and not a little angry over the turn affairs had taken. Consistently with his character, he blamed his wife for not having managed her father better; he dwelt at length on the difference that this would make in their prospects.

To this Jean replied spiritedly that he had not seemed to worry much about their prospects when he had insisted on marrying her. The result of the argument was a confession on the part

of Heath to the effect that he was "in" pretty deep financially; that he had counted upon Craven to help him out, and that now he would probably face ruin or the next thing to it. Instead of trying to make a career for himself, he had been living on the principal of a fortune not very large in the first place, and realising its power for diminishment, he had speculated, and had lost most of what he had. His marriage with Jean, whose father was known to be rich, had helped him a little in stalling off certain creditors; the further knowledge that there would be nothing for him from Craven would make matters very hard for him.

"Why don't you work?" asked the practical Jean.

But real work had never appealed to Heath, who had been brought up to luxury and had never learned to do anything well. He had dabbled in literature, but there was little money in that, and he had neither the courage nor the foundation necessary for settling down to the steady grind that might gradually have made him either a successful journalist or a writer of saleable books.

To Jean, who knew scarcely anything about the value of money, since she had always lived in an atmosphere of plenty, this was a terrible situation. Suddenly she felt helpless, inert. She had a husband, and he was confessing that he could not support her; that he could not support their un-

born child, unless her own father came to the rescue. She had disobeyed and defied her father; she was unhappy because she was afraid that she had lost his love; now the husband for whom she had made the sacrifice had no thought for her unhappiness; his concern was with the material benefits of which she deprived them.

Jean began to see it all very clearly now; her father had been more capable of judging character than she had. Raymond had fascinated her; in her consuming love for him she had failed to realise his weakness. Now she knew that though he might still love her, his love had never been entirely free from other elements; he had banked on having not merely Jean Craven for his wife, but the daughter of Richard Craven, with the dowry that she would surely possess.

It was a terrible moment of disillusionment for Jean. She had gained her father only to lose him, and she had lost him for the sake of one who now was not willing to make up to her anything for her loss. She was doubly bereft, for now she could never be to her husband what she had been; now she would have to conceal her lack of faith in him, but the lack would still be there; now she would have to keep up appearances for the child's sake, but in her heart she would despise this man who had so deceived her as to his motives.

"What about Gordon?" was Heath's question

to his wife. "Wouldn't he help you? He is the executor of your father's estate; he knows that Craven isn't playing fair with you. Wouldn't he be willing to advance you some money on what will most certainly be yours some day?"

"The money is not his to give or to withhold. The money will be Gerry's," answered Jean.

"Well, hasn't Gerry always been your friend?"

Jean looked at him horrified.

"You wouldn't want me to ask Gerry Gordon to lend us money, would you?" she asked.

"Why not? He knows that he has no right to it."

"No, Raymond, we must fight this out for ourselves," Jean answered lifelessly. "I must think what we can do, but I do not think that I can let either Uncle Jack or Gerry help us."

That night Raymond came home intoxicated. He spoke roughly to his wife, and went off to bed without eating any dinner. At first Jean did not know what to think; then gradually it began to dawn on her—her husband had been drinking. And she drew a long, shivering breath; she had married, not only a weak man, but one who had in him the making of a drunkard.

CHAPTER XV

HEATH MEETS ROBERT HAVEN

RAYMOND left the house in the morning while Jean still slept. She had spent most of the night in restless thinking; already her mind was busily at work with the problem of how best to cope with this unexpected situation. Either Raymond must never drink again or she must leave him, for she would not bring her child under the contaminating influence of liquor. Jean was young but she had certain rooted convictions, and one was that a child must have the right surroundings of affection and the proper proportion of care. Better no father than one who would cause all manner of unhappiness. She herself had had all that to go through with; she would not let a child of hers suffer as she had done.

At last, tired out in mind and body, she had fallen asleep, and so it was that her husband left her. As a matter of fact, he was glad not to have to face her, for he was ashamed of himself, and also, he wished now that he had not unmasked himself so completely. He had bungled things—of course the Gordons would help her, if they even so much as guessed at a need. It was only

Jean's abominable pride; he must try to win her back, and then perhaps he could make her see things differently. But he must not drink any more—Heath knew better than any one else what drink could do to him.

That day he met an old chum in town—Robert Haven. Haven was just home from a trip West, where he had been investing in oil. He had a great proposition to put to Heath; he could make him rich beyond his greatest dreams in two years' time. The two lunched together; Heath gave Haven his machine in exchange for some shares in an oil field. He had not used the car much of late; Jean had not cared for his wild method of driving it, and the saving on upkeep served to help put off the evil day. It was a good little car, and Haven gave him what seemed a mighty good price for it.

"I tell you what," said Heath. "Come up to our little apartment and have dinner. My wife will be glad to know you, I'm sure."

So the matter was arranged, and Heath telephoned to Jean.

When they arrived at the apartment at five o'clock, Jean looked very sweet and dainty, if a little pale. Haven was at once interested in this charming girl, who was, as he knew, the daughter of "Richard Dale," the well-known novelist. He made himself most agreeable, and Heath was quite his old self at the dinner table, so that Jean

began to wonder if all those strange and terrible things of the day before had actually happened.

Presently Haven began to tell about the oil fields. He was an enthusiastic talker, and Jean listened, fascinated. Raymond was commenting to himself, "Good for Bob. This'll help me, sure." For he saw that Jean was taking it all in, and he began to perceive that she was slowly making up her mind to something. They spent a pleasant evening together, and Haven promised to call again.

After their guest was gone, Raymond told Jean about the automobile. He had been most attentive to her all evening and she had been buoyed up by this return to his former manner.

"It was very wise of you to sell the car," she approved. "We do not need it and it only means an additional expense."

A little later she faced him with a question:

"How much money would Mr. Haven favour putting into these oil shares?"

"For us, do you mean?" asked Heath quickly.

"Yes, providing we had money to invest."

"Well, if we had five thousand, it would mean a nice little income in a year's time, I think," he said eagerly.

"I have decided," Jean then told him, "to ask Uncle Jack to lend me some money. If you will promise not to drink, ever, you may have what he will lend me to buy oil shares with."

Heath was delighted. That was the way for a dear little wife to talk. They would manage to get through this year somehow, and next year they would be on Easy Street. Of course he wouldn't drink; he admitted that he had taken a little too much the night before, but then he had felt so down and out that nothing seemed to matter. This was a different story. Now he could go out and mingle again with some of his old friends without having the fear of a pack of creditors at his heels every minute.

Jean listened quietly; she was making a mighty sacrifice, but she realised that her husband had no appreciation of the immensity of it. In reality she would rather have cut off her right hand than do this thing that she was about to do, but she had made up her mind and now it must be done.

"We will not invest all of what Gordon is willing to let you have," suggested Raymond. "We will keep enough to get past this spell of hard times with, and perhaps I can pick up a place on one of the newspapers again."

And with that Jean had to be content.

CHAPTER XVI

JOHN GORDON TO THE RESCUE

JEAN wrote to John Gordon again and asked if she might see him. Gordon, scenting some trouble, hurried up to town and went straight to her. She was alone; she had not been well, for she had been much depressed after writing the note that she knew would bring her what her husband wanted.

"You're pale, little girl," Gordon commented, looking at her searchingly. His tone made her blush, but she answered bravely:

"I think I'm all right, Uncle Jack, only tired and a little worried."

"Worried? What about?" he hastened to ask.

She explained to him, though only in part. Pride forbade her telling the whole story, and consideration for her feelings led Gordon not to press her for details. He therefore came to the conclusion that the Heaths were approaching a crisis, that their means being limited, Jean, accustomed to luxuries, was confronted by the problem of a new situation, one which she did not feel entirely equal to. He took all this for granted,

of course, Jean not realising how much of it all he was misunderstanding. However, his wrath was aroused against Richard Craven, who had permitted his daughter to get into this fix when there was plenty of money for all that she needed, money being held in trust for a young man who had no intention whatever of ever claiming it.

"I hate to have to ask you for this, Uncle Jack," Jean said apologetically, and Gordon burst out with,

"Don't be foolish. To whom else should you go if not to your old guardian and friend? How much money will give you everything that you need, and make sure of your comfort?"

"I wanted to borrow five thousand dollars," Jean admitted timidly.

Gordon laughed. "I thought by your tone that you were going to say five million. Come, little girl, you mustn't feel so badly about this. That young husband of yours has a good many years ahead of him; I'd like to see him get a good start. I'll give you a check for the sum you say and if you need more let me know."

"But, Uncle Jack, I intend to pay this back, you know," Jean protested.

"All right, any time you're ready, but don't let it bother you. But I wish that you would let us hear from you a little oftener. When you were a very little girl, you used to come to me with all your troubles; now that you are a woman

I want to know that you still feel that you can call upon me. I have loved you, Jean, like a daughter, and if you had seen your way clear to become my daughter in real truth, nothing would have made me happier. But your life is your own to do with as you will, and I do not reproach you. I should like to know, though, that you have enough faith in the affection of myself and Gerry to make you confide in us when any kind of trouble comes to you."

Jean's gratitude was frank and not a little pathetic. This dear, good, old Uncle Jack, who knew so well how to make people feel right with themselves and the world,—no wonder everybody loved him! Jean bid him an affectionate good-bye, and hoped that both he and Gerry would not hesitate to come and see her whenever an opportunity offered.

Heath, of course, was elated by what he deemed his wife's success in getting the money. Even before the check came he had planned just how they would use it. Jean asked for five hundred dollars for herself—to cover expenses when the baby should come—and he gave it, though grudgingly. Four thousand he put into oil at once—the rest he pocketed. He became once more his old, gay self, and chided Jean for any misgivings she might have as to their future.

Often in these days Jean sat alone in her little bedroom, and, sewing away busily—a train-

ing for which she had Aunt Matilda to thank—she would dream of days to come, and plan for the child that would be hers. It would be a boy, of course, and his name should be Richard—no matter what Raymond might say, he must be Richard Craven Heath. And the child would one day bring the gift of love to his grandfather's heart and win it back to warmth of human affection.

Her husband had small part in her thoughts. He was away a great deal, and when he came home there was a certain constraint between them. Heath was not too well pleased with the child's coming—it would mean a great deal of additional expense, and then, too, Jean had grown so strange here of late; she seemed to be getting farther and farther away from him, and her attitude of aloofness, which seemed to imply superiority, vexed as well as puzzled him. Why couldn't she act like a normal, healthy person, instead of turning from a bright, fun-loving girl into a dreamy-eyed, serious-minded woman to whom the ordinary pleasures of life no longer made any appeal?

CHAPTER XVII

JEAN'S BABY ARRIVES

JEAN'S baby was born in the hospital as she had arranged. It was not a boy, however, but a girl, and for one long moment a wave of bitterest disappointment swept through and filled Jean's soul. Then her mother-heart reacted and she knew that no matter what the baby was or what it was like, it would from now on occupy the largest share of her thought, and the entire devotion of her heart and her body.

During the weeks that she lay in the hospital, recovering her strength so slowly that sometimes it seemed as if she never would get well, but would yet elude the watchful care of those bent upon restoring her, and so would slip away from life in spite of all of them, John Gordon was a faithful visitor to Jean's room. It was he who made sure that she had every comfort, and it was he who presently perceived that the presence of her husband was detrimental rather than beneficial to her. Therefore he cultivated Raymond's acquaintance a little more, and finding that the young man was open to a chance for employment,

found a place for him on one of the daily newspapers.

But a week before Jean left the hospital, Gordon himself was suddenly taken ill. The doctor ordered him away for a complete change and rest, and he was forced, much against his will, to send for Gerry, who, now an architect, was making a trip West, preparatory to going into business. Gerry came at once, to find the doctor bent upon despatching his father to parts unknown, and so Gerry at once made arrangements to take the sick man on an extended sea trip.

That was when Gerry went to visit Jean, and saw the girl he had loved all his life, pale and wan and suspiciously spiritless—no more the Jean of birds'-nest hunts, and cherry-picking and pantry-robbing—but a woman and a mother and, he feared, a not altogether happy wife. But Gerry was not the sort of man to meddle with what did not concern him. He was his old natural self with Jean, and it seemed as if his very presence braced her to a fresh effort to live.

Gerry was delighted with the baby.

"Why, she's just like you, Jeannie," he cried, in pleased surprise.

"Why shouldn't she be?" Jean retorted, with a touch of the old humour.

And Gerry looked a little shame-faced, as if he felt that he had been guilty of tactlessness.

Jean felt very badly, of course, over the news

that Gerry brought. It seemed as if the last link with the old life would be broken if John Gordon went away. But Gerry comforted her with the assurance that he did not think it would be for long; his father would get a good rest, and then they would come home again. And perhaps Jean and the baby could go to the country, which he thought would help them. If Jean had some trouble keeping back the tears when Gerry made ready to go, at least she managed to conceal it, and even smiled at him when he hoped that the baby would grow up quickly and soon be a big, bouncing girl.

But Gerry had been gone only a short while when he appeared again.

"What's the baby's name?" he asked breathlessly.

"You funny boy," laughed Jean. "Did you come all the way back to ask that?"

"Well," he admitted, looking a little foolish, "I wanted to get her something, and I needed to know her initials."

"That was very sweet of you, Gerry," Jean said softly. "Her name is to be Margery Craven Heath."

Gerry took out a little book and wrote it down. "It's a pretty name," he conceded, "but I thought you would call her Jean."

"No, I wanted her to have some other name,"

answered Jean, and again they said good-bye to each other.

This was the way it came about that Gerry had gone to get the baby a present:

He had not thought of such a thing—nor had his father, who was old-fashioned and did not connect presents with babies—until he had looked at the baby. Then he had suddenly felt a tightening at his throat, and though he was too loyal to express even to himself his thought, he knew that down in his heart there had come to him the sudden realisation that had things happened otherwise, this baby might have been his. And he had wanted right away to give it something. He left the hospital and went straight to one of the big stores, where, among the cases in which silver and jewelry were displayed, he found an accommodating salesman.

"I want something for a new baby," began Gerry. There followed a discussion of the baby's sex and age and so on, and at last the clerk suggested a chain and locket.

"Do babies wear those things?" asked Gerry, a trifle dubiously.

"Oh, yes, indeed, most girl babies have some sort of necklace, and these flat gold lockets are quite the thing."

"It is solid gold, of course?" asked Gerry.

"Yes, and you may have it engraved with the baby's initials."

"But I don't know them," cried Gerry. "That's funny, I never asked the baby's name. But it'll be Jean, of course."

"Why not find out and let me know?" suggested the clerk.

Gerry considered.

"I have very little time," he answered. "You see, I am going away."

"Well, if you'll find out and 'phone me, I can have the engraving done and send the chain and locket for you."

"That'll be all right. I'll let you know in an hour."

And just at that moment Gerry had an inspiration.

"See here," he said, "is there a place in that locket for a picture?"

"Oh, yes," and the clerk opened the locket.

Then Gerry did something the motive and reason for which perplexed him for many a long day. He took out his watch, and, opening it, removed from the back of it a little picture. It was a snap-shot of Jean, which he himself had taken when she was fourteen. It was the Jean of the good old days when they had romped away the hours together. She had given him a camera for his birthday, and he had taken some pictures, among them this one. It was a little faded, but it was a good print even so, and Gerry took a last

longing look at it as he handed it to the clerk, with these words,

"Put this in the locket, please, and send it to——" and he gave the name and address. Then he hurried back to the hospital to find out the baby's name and telephone it into the store.

When the locket came Jean cried over it. Gerry was such a dear; no one else would have thought of doing such a thing. For she had at once discovered the picture, and it recalled a hundred memories of those happy days now done with forever.

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW HEATH FELL UPON EVIL DAYS

AT last the hospital doctors said that Jean might return to her home. But she and Heath had given up the little apartment in which they had lived since their marriage, and now the question arose as to where they should live. It was up to Raymond to find an apartment and one that was inexpensive, for although he was now earning a weekly salary, Jean did not dare permit him to indulge in extravagances, since all their surplus funds were used up, and the only money that stood between them and poverty—aside from what her husband earned—was a gift sent her with a farewell note by John Gordon on the eve of his departure for the South.

Jean had not told Raymond of this gift and was holding it for a possible rainy day, for now there was the baby to consider, and in her present state of health Jean lacked something of her usual nerve and feeling of capability.

Heath found some rooms, and had their furniture taken to them from the storage warehouse. He secured a half-grown coloured girl to come

by the day and help with the work. Then he went to the hospital with a cab and took his wife and child to the new home.

But it was no longer the Heath who had wooed and won Jean Craven. During the days in which his wife lay in the hospital Raymond had picked up companions of the sort that could do him no good. Unknown to Jean, he had already been in difficulty in the newspaper office because of several inconvenient lapses from sobriety, and even now there was danger that he might not long hold the place Gordon had secured for him.

As for Jean, she had done more thinking than was quite good for her in the days of her illness. She knew now that her infatuation for Raymond was dead; she knew now that she had at no time loved him with the deep, abiding love that forms a firm foundation for a happy and contented married life, and she was alive to the fact that sooner or later she would be confronted by the problem of letting him know exactly how she did feel.

Her whole heart was given in the meantime to the baby. It was a dainty, chubby little creature, perfectly healthy, with a sound stomach, a fine disposition and a fair share of good looks. Even Raymond, who handled it with diffidence, was moved to a warm feeling of proud parenthood as he looked on baby "Margery," and if anything could have held together these two who had made such a wreck of their romance it was the child.

But even a child cannot battle against the devil Alcohol. Raymond began to find work irksome; he spent more and more time in cheap public-houses, came home at all hours, and sometimes not at all. He spent more than he gave at home, and Jean had quietly to dip into her reserve fund to furnish necessities for the child.

Then one day Raymond had a quarrel with his managing editor and resigned his place on the paper.

That same day Robert Haven came back to town, and by chance Raymond met him. Heath, needless to say, was already under the influence of liquor.

"Come in and have a drink," he invited, and the two entered a deserted little corner saloon, where a lone bartender held the citadel for possible customers.

"What about my oil shares?" Raymond demanded aggressively, after their first drink, and while they waited for a second.

"Oh, they're all right," Haven replied. "Prospects good; you'll be rich yet, Raymond, my lad."

"Shucks," declared Raymond impatiently, "I need money now. Can't you sell for me, and let me have the cash?"

Haven smiled. "Selling's not so good, just now," he confessed. "It's a case of waiting."

"Well, I won't wait," cried Raymond. "You

can have your old oil shares and give me back my money."

"Suppose I haven't the money?" Haven fenced.

"Look here, Haven," Heath said, losing a little of his domineering tone. "Give me a thousand for the shares, and I'll be satisfied."

"You're crazy," the other answered. "The shares aren't worth ten dollars at the moment."

This was too much for Heath. His eyes glinted. "I'll give you three seconds to reconsider that statement," he said in an ominously quiet voice.

Haven laughed again. "It's the truth," he said. "The money was put into working the field. We know that the oil is there, but we haven't struck it. When we do I'll let you know."

"And if you don't strike?"

"Well, that's a speculator's risk," was the nonchalant reply.

Heath's right hand moved suddenly. Before the other could appreciate the movement there was a shot. Haven crumpled up in the chair without a word. Heath never waited. Even as the bartender rushed from behind the bar, the gun was levelled at him. There was another report, and Heath was out of the door and down a side street. Before an alarm could be given, for the bartender was wounded, the murderer was well away, and he never stopped going until he had put the river between himself and the city.

Jean never saw her husband again.

But she received a letter postmarked Jersey City. In it Raymond told her that he had shot Haven and had gotten away. "Destroy this letter unless you want me hanged. I didn't mean to kill him. I shot to frighten him. I don't know where I'm going, nor when I shall be back. I resigned my job before this happened."

No thought of what was to become of her or the child. Jean read the letter and pondered over it bitterly, then destroyed it, as he had asked. In a way she felt relieved that he was gone, terrible though the circumstances of his going were.

The newspapers told her that Haven was dead. The bartender was only slightly wounded. But the unknown assailant remained a mystery. The usual hue and cry were raised, and died a natural death when no evidence or clue was forthcoming.

Jean moved from her present rooms to others some distance away. She did not wish to be questioned. So she called herself Mrs. Craven and passed herself off as a widow. The new rooms were very cheap, and she figured out that with great care she might make her money stretch over a few months. In the meantime she tried to get some work. At first she tried writing; but it was hard to get anything worth while to do when she dared not reveal her true identity. She sent things to the magazines and they came back; she advertised herself as a publisher's reader or

a proof-reader. But the summer was coming on and work was scarce.

As her funds grew lower and lower she decided that she must have work of some kind. She read in the paper an advertisement for a maid of refinement. She answered it and was engaged. But now she had to leave the baby in charge of a neighbour, and this broke her heart. In desperation she wrote to John Gordon and to her father.

If at this time Jean could have found her father she would have been willing to go down on her knees and beg his forgiveness for what had happened. But the days went by and her letter was returned, marked "not at address," nor did any reply come from Gordon, and she was forced to believe that here again the letter had not reached its proper destination.

All the while the child grew and thrived. She was now becoming a really pretty baby, and Jean's heart yearned over her. In the few hours that she had alone with the child she could scarcely bear to let it go from her arms. She talked to it, played with it, smothered it in wild caresses. Some premonition of what might happen cast its shadow over her mind, and filled her waking thoughts with visions of the child left alone and uncared for, neglected and maybe dying.

To make matters worse, at the very moment when she most needed the weekly wage she was

earning, the people for whom she worked decided to close up their house and go away. The servants were to be dismissed, and Jean found herself confronted by a hot summer to be spent in the city with not enough money to keep her going for more than a few weeks.

At last it became intolerable. She determined to go back to "TIMBERVALE." She would see for herself what the old home looked like, and would try to learn something of the whereabouts of Craven. Perhaps she could in this way locate the Gordons at least, and so get the help that she needed. There was no pride left in Jean and little fight.

She made up a little bundle of baby Margery's things, and with the child in her arms, started for her old home. To save carfare she planned to walk part of the way. It was a hot day and a dusty one, and she was worn out before she started. It seemed as if even her mind refused to work properly, and she left her rooms in a kind of daze, which was probably only the forerunner of the disaster, which, all unknown to her, was now threatening.

CHAPTER XIX

IF CRAVEN HAD KNOWN

JIM WARREN drove his Ford along the dusty highroad on his way toward the little place where, with his young wife, he made his home. Jim was a farmer in a small way; he owned a house and a few acres not many miles from a thriving New Jersey town, and there he and his wife raised their chickens and vegetables, and on the whole managed to be comfortably prosperous.

As Jim drove along in the broiling sun, he was deeply immersed in thoughts of the coming crops. Rain was needed badly; the plants were not thriving as they should, and he had counted on this being a more than usually good summer.

Suddenly he brought his machine to a standstill. He had seen something by the roadside that startled him. It was a woman, lying just off the beaten track of the numberless automobiles that passed that way, and as sure as you lived there was a baby asleep beside the woman.

Jim climbed down and went over to the prostrate figure.

"Overcome by the heat," he murmured to him-

self, and looked about him helplessly. Here was a fine piece of business—a sick woman and a little child several miles from anywhere. Jim took off his hat and scratched his head; then he leaned over and shook the woman gently. She did not move, and now Jim began to fear that this was not merely heat prostration. The woman looked as if she were dead.

At that instant the baby woke up and started to cry. Jim saw that it was a pretty baby, but not being a father, he had not the least notion in the world what to do. He began to wish that some one else would happen along.

And the wish was granted almost immediately. A touring car rode up over the hill and Jim hailed the chauffeur. There were two men in the car and they peered out, at once interested. Jim explained how he had found the woman, and one of the men, a doctor evidently, got out of the machine.

After a brief examination, he commanded Jim and the chauffeur to help him place the woman in the car. The other man took the baby.

"This is a hospital case," the doctor stated briefly. "I doubt if she'll live till we get her there." Then he told Jim where they would take her, and ordered the driver off. Jim, well rid of a bad job, made ready to go on his own journey homeward. Just then his eye was caught by a bundle. In the hurry and confusion it had been

missed. He picked it up, and not seeing any way of giving it to the people in the now speeding car, he took it home.

Jim's wife opened the bundle—womanlike. She found a number of baby things, all fine and all very dainty, with tiny bands sewed in the dresses, on which was written a name, Margery Craven Heath. They were all that remained of that dainty trousseau which Jean had prepared for the little stranger in the first happy days of her married life.

The Warrens were honest, and they were kind-hearted. They knew that these things ought to follow the child. But, also, they were busy on their little farm, and Jim couldn't go to town every day. He remembered the name of the hospital the doctor had given him, and a week later he drove in, the package with him. But at the hospital he learned that the woman had died and was already buried, while the baby had been sent to the Harmony Home for Waifs. As this Home was some distance away Jim did not pursue his investigations, but took the bundle home again, where he and Maria decided that some day soon they would make a visit to the Home to see the baby, and would then restore its clothes.

But the visit was postponed and then forgotten, and the little package of clothes was laid away in an old chest in the attic, and there it was destined to stay for many a long day.

At the Harmony Home they took in the little stranger, and entered her name on the books as Margery Craven Heath, because that name appeared on the dress the baby wore, while on the locket that hung around her chubby little neck were the letters, M. C. H., woven in an engraved monogram.

But the matron at the home took the locket off the child's neck and laid it away in the safe. Children in orphan asylums do not usually have jewelry to wear.

In this way baby Margery became one of the several dozen homeless and parentless children in a charitable organisation, while the mansion at "TIMBERVALE," grew musty and damp, and gradually took on an air of neglect and desolation.

CHAPTER XX

WHERE IS "RICHARD DALE"?

MANY months later the publishers of "Richard Dale" received the manuscript of a new novel from their illustrious client and made ready to issue it.

But to the question, "Where is Richard Dale?" there was no answer; Richard Dale or Richard Craven—whichever you chose to call him—was lost completely, deliberately, to his friends.

So the years went by, until there came a day when, down in a bit of woods, on the edge of a rippling stream, just away from the noise of traffic on a broad, main-travelled road, there sat in the doorway of a tiny cottage at sunset, a grey-haired man, his one long, thin hand absently stroking the head of a great, beautiful white collie, his unseeing eyes gazing out over the fields that stretched before him.

"What fools men are," the man murmured dreamily. The dog lifted his ears as if with comprehension.

"I wonder," the deep, low voice went on monotonously, "where Jean is?" At that the dog pricked up his ears again. The old Roderick Dhu was dead, but the son of Roderick knew that loved name, so often on the lips of his master.

Richard Craven raised his head, white as the snow, and looked up at the sky. His hand went on stroking the collie.

"If I could find her," he whispered. "If I could find her." He closed his eyes as if to shut away some unwanted vision.

"If only she had been like her mother in disposition instead of so like in looks. But a Craven, a stubborn Craven—it was inevitable that we should clash. Heath—a puppy, a no-account as I live—and to sacrifice 'TIMBERVALE,' me, a fortune for such as he! Good God, I'd give anything for the sight of her. What if Heath failed her? What if she were poor, unhappy? And yet I owe her nothing. She defied me. She took her own way. Why do I torture myself? She didn't want me; probably she doesn't want me now. I'm an old fool. The book's done, and I need a change. Look here, Roderick Dhu," pulling the dog's ear, "what say you, shall we take to the road?"

At that the dog yelped happily. "The road"—these two knew what that meant—the long, shining hours in the woods and beside the rivers; the cool nights in fragrant haylofts, the welcome showers after the heat and the crash of thunder

following the lightning's vivid flash. The dog and Richard Craven understood each other; the collie was as accomplished a vagabond as his master and his sire before him.

"To-morrow we'll shut up shop and hit the trail for the woods," Craven declared, rising to his full height, and looking down on the dog half-humorously. "Come, Rod, it's dinner time, and there's a bone in the cupboard for a hungry dog."

Man and dog went into the house. Darkness settled down gradually; but a light shown from one of the windows of the cottage far into the night. Then, for a few hours, before the dawn came creeping in rosy raiment over the hills, the house lay dark and silent.

Down in the clump of woodland back of the house a man skulked. He did not dare show himself, for he knew that he was not a fit object for sight. His clothes were in tatters, his beard was long and straggly, his face and hands were unwashed, and his eyes gleamed with feverish brightness.

A dog growled and the man started with fright. He climbed a low fence and lay down under the bushes. The dew made mud on his dirty garments and smudged his blackened face, but he fell asleep, and so went on sleeping until the sun was high in the sky.

Not long after dawn a man and a dog came

out of the door of the cottage. The key was turned in the lock, and the two travellers started on their way. Craven wore cheap rough tweeds and carried a stick, also a small bundle. His pockets bulged. It was his custom to provide himself with food for a day or two at least. He gave a last look at the cottage and lifted his shabby hat gallantly. He loved the little house with its power to provide quiet and rest and comfort. It was a haven to which he could return when wearied with much walking; it was the shrine in which dwelt the spirit of his genius. He left his work closed sacredly within its doors, and he feared no violation of that sanctity.

Meanwhile, the dog was sniffing around the garden restlessly. Craven laid it to impatience to be off, and whistled after him. Obediently Roderick Dhu answered the whistle, and followed his master through the gate.

Craven breathed in the soft, sweet-scented air of the early summer morning appreciatively. It gave fresh vigour to his stride and a slight glow to his cheeks.

To the casual observer he was an elderly, carefree follower of the open road, tramp or nature-lover and student, it mattered little which one called him. But to himself he was a self-deceiving coward, running away once more from trouble that threatened him. He had been thinking too much of Jean. He must forget—forget—forget—

And yet, deep down in his heart, he knew that before this journey just beginning should be ended, he would either have found Jean, or would know that he had lost her forever in all truth.

He could not know that there, within his own gates, lay the very clue he sought. Destiny was not yet ready to furnish him with full enlightenment; he must have more and greater trials to prepare his mind and heart for the real knowledge of the sin to which his actions had led him.

CHAPTER XXI

THE COTTAGE IN THE WOODS

THE ragged man under the bushes rubbed his eyes, and slowly got to his feet. He was still very tired and now very hungry. He crept up toward the house, wary of the possible dog. But all lay still before him; perhaps the occupants of the cottage still slept. And yet when he looked at the sun he knew that it was almost noonday.

He crept closer and closer; yes, the blinds were shut and the curtains down. There was no sign of any one or anything. He came out boldly and walked up to the back door. It was locked. He walked around front; that door was also locked.

It was not, however, the first time he had gotten into a house through a window. In a few moments he stood in the little study that opened off the porch. The first thing that caught his eye was a picture—Jean.

Raymond Heath caught his breath! How did that come here? He went to the desk—it was open, but everything had been gathered up and piled neatly. On a basket lay some sheets of manuscript—he took them up. "Craven, as I live," he whispered to himself.

Then suddenly madness seemed to seize him. Craven, the man who had cast his child away because she loved him, Heath; Craven, the man who could have kept Jean and him happy had he acted like a father toward them; Craven, who had been the cause of his wife's coldness; the cause of his wife's growing contempt for him; the man who had stood between him and an honourable career. Heath had done his share of reflecting in the days that had passed. And he had let hatred eat into his heart until it had become an obsession. The object of his hate was Craven—Craven, who had made him a murderer and an outcast. Where was Jean? Heath wanted to know that too. Where was the baby? Here? No, he scarcely thought so. The chances were that Craven knew no more of Jean than he did. But he would kill Craven, all the same. This was his chance. If he died for it, he would kill him.

Heath sank into a chair. He was too weak for so much emotion. He needed food. Gradually it dawned on him that Craven must have gone away. Things were arranged as if for an absence of their owner.

He went to the kitchen. There he found a pantry—well stocked with canned things. He helped himself, but ate sparingly. He knew that he was almost starving. Then he rested a while, after which he searched the house, hoping that

perhaps somewhere there might be some money. To his surprise he found some notes—a fair number—stuffed carelessly in the pocket of a pair of trousers hanging alone in a closet. He transferred the notes to his own pocket.

He was now convinced that Craven was gone for a while. So he found matches and some cigarettes, and sat down in an armchair to smoke. After a little it occurred to him that now he might clean himself up a bit. He had been dirty so long that it was only gradually that this idea worked upon him.

The thought came to him that he might stay here in the house and wait for Craven. So, after washing, he rummaged around and discovered some of Craven's clothes packed away. Thereupon he treated himself to fresh if not particularly well-fitting garments. Then he ate a little more.

But little by little the fear came to him that Craven might return. Although he wanted to kill his father-in-law, he was not sure that he would be able to do so. He might fail, and Craven would turn him over to the police. No, he must think of some other revenge. Ha! Ha! he had it!—his face grew full of cunning, and once he laughed—not a pleasant laugh.

The hours went by and night came. Heath hunted out a travelling bag and filled it. He even took some things to eat. And he took the pie-

ture of Jean. When it was quite dark he got his things together and then went into the study. There he took from the desk everything he could find in the way of manuscripts and notesheets. He tore these in shreds, enjoying the rasping noise of the paper as he pulled it to pieces. Then he made a pile of it in the centre of the room. There was an oil lamp on the table; he opened it up and sprinkled the paper with it. After which he went into the kitchen and made another pile, and sprinkled oil over this. It was going to be a thorough job.

Fifteen minutes later there was no sign of a tramp or any other man in the vicinity of the cottage. Heath had made a clean getaway. But he had left his mark behind him, for the cottage was already a mass of flames. Before any one could reach it, for Craven had taken good care that he had no neighbours for several miles around, the little house was practically destroyed, only the shell of it left standing in the midst of its garden of bright flowers and against its background of young-leaved trees.

From a long way off Heath watched the glow of the fire, and for a time gloried in it. But, as the light began to fade, a chill came into the air and into his heart. Something seemed to go out of him—he saw himself and his act in a new light.

That night Heath dreamed of Jean, and she held out a helping hand to him as he seemed about

to slide over the edge of a great precipice. When he woke there was sweat on his forehead.

Had the Law not been at his heels he would have gone back that very day to try to find Jean. That was what he wanted to do. Perhaps it was as well that he did not, for had he by any chance come upon the truth the old Devil might have taken possession of him again. As it was, he took the money he had obtained in Craven's cottage, and with it went to a distant city, where he obtained work as a newspaper reporter, and there he made a new start in life. He called himself John Grayson, and he grew a pointed beard. There were already threads of white in his hair, and with these changes in appearance, his best friends would not have recognised him.

So it was that the fire which consumed Craven's treasures purged of hate the soul of the man who set it raging. But Heath had had his revenge —how great a revenge even he did not realise.

But now there were two hearts turned longingly toward the city which was supposed to shelter Jean. The secret of her fate must sooner or later be revealed, and to this end the threads of Destiny seemed to be weaving.

BOOK TWO: MARGERY

BOOK TWO: MARGERY

CHAPTER I

THE HARMONY HOME FOR WAIFS

BUT, Margery, I don't like junket." The small boy puckered up his face to cry and turned his head as the older girl held out the spoon containing the distasteful junket.

"Now, Willie boy," Margery said soothingly, "sick little boys must eat what is good for them. Else they'll never get well. Be Margery's own pet, there's a good boy, and I'll give you twenty rides on the swing when you're well again."

"Will you tell me a story now?" bargained Willie.

Margery hesitated. She was needed in so many places at once, but Willie was the littlest boy in the orphans' home and surely he must be taken care of first.

"I tell you what," she compromised. "You eat this nice junket and I'll tuck you up in bed, and I'll tell you as much story as I can in five minutes. Then, if you go right off to sleep, and have a good nap, I'll tell you some more story while I'm dressing you this afternoon."

"But I don't want to take a nap," Willie whined.

"Of course not, but then you know, if you don't take a nap you can't have a nice dream. And what's the use of Margery telling you a story if you're not going to have a beautiful dream about it?"

Willie considered the matter. Margery improved the time by putting a spoonful of junket to his lips. Absorbed in his problem of nap-taking, he swallowed the junket, and discovered that it wasn't so bad after all. Margery went on feeding him, talking all the while.

"It'll soon be Spring, Willie dear," she said in her soft voice. "And there'll be lots of green things and flowers. And when we go out for a walk we'll hear the birds sing."

"Do people get measles in the Springtime?" Willie demanded.

Margery laughed.

"No more measles," she said. "We've all had them except Becky and Tom, and the doctor doesn't think they're going to get them at all."

"But when can we go for a walk, Margery?" Willie wanted to know. After all, he wasn't interested in Becky and Tom—not if Margery and he were going walking. Only Willie knew all the wonderful things one did and found when taking a walk with Margery.

"As soon as you're perfectly well," Margery

promised, "and there is a sunshiny day, we will go for a walk down by the river path, and who knows what we shall see?"

"Will the fairies be there?" asked the persistent Willie.

"I don't know, p'rhaps. Or maybe there'll be goblins," Margery answered impressively. "But now if you want a story you must get right down in the bed, for I have dishes to wipe in the kitchen and Jimmy Hart's trousers to mend."

"I don't want you to go away, Margery," Willie cried, holding tight to her skirt.

"Now listen, Willie," Margery tried to be stern. "You must be a good boy or I shan't tell you any story. And I'll have to send Miss Alice to look after you."

That was enough. Willie decided to be obedient. Miss Alice was very impatient and cross. Ten years as under-matron in an orphan asylum had not sweetened a naturally sour disposition, and Miss Alice stood generally for disagreeable things to the little inmates.

"Now then," Margery began, as she tucked Willie up, "there was once a princess called Heavy Heart. She——"

"Did she ever have the measles, Margery?" Willie interrupted.

"Princesses don't have measles," Margery stated. "Now if you don't keep still, Willie, I can't tell you any story."

"All right, I'll be a good boy," Willie answered resignedly.

"Well," continued the story-teller, "this little Princess Heavy Heart lived in a great big castle all by herself. Of course, she had lots of servants to wait on her, but she had no little folks to play with and no brothers or sisters."

"Was she an orphan?" Willie couldn't resist asking.

"Yes," said Margery softly. "She was an orphan. Her mother and father were both dead. She was lonely Sometimes she looked out of the window of her big castle and she wanted to run away. But she did not know where to run. One day she heard a funny little noise under her bed. She peeped under, and what do you think she saw?"

Willie's eyes were very wide open now and he waited breathlessly.

"What?" he asked, in an awed whisper.

"She saw a little mouse, a little grey mouse."

"Like the one Miss Alice caught in the trap up in the loft?" inquired Willie.

"Yes, just like that, a dear little furry-coated mouse."

"Did she kill the mouse, like Miss Alice did?" asked Willie.

Margery shuddered.

"No, she just said to the Mouse, 'Hello, little Mouse.' And the Mouse looked up at her with

his tiny bright eyes and he said, 'Hello, little Princess.' Then Heavy Heart said, 'What do you want, little Mouse?' and the Mouse answered, 'I heard that you were lonely and I came to play with you.' 'Oh,' said the Princess, 'that was sweet of you. But what shall we play?' Then the Mouse came out from under the bed and stood right up on his hind legs. 'Let's play ball,' he said. So Heavy Heart got out a little ball, and she and the Mouse played ball for an hour. 'Let's have a tea-party,' said the Mouse, when they were tired. Then Heavy Heart got out a little table and two little chairs, and they sat down at the table. But they didn't have anything to eat. So Heavy Heart said to the Mouse, 'You go back under the bed and I'll get something to eat.' Then she rang a bell, and a man came to the door and Heavy Heart said, 'Bring me a lot of good things to eat.' So——"

"What did he bring?" asked Willie eagerly.

"Well, he brought pie and cake and big apples and oranges, and—" even Margery's imagination failed.

"And cheese for the mouse?" put in Willie.

"Yes, cheese for the Mouse, beautiful yellow cheese and a large pot of hot chocolate." Hot chocolate was a delicacy in the Harmony Home for Waifs and the children all longed for it.

"Did Heavy Heart and the Mouse have a party, then?" Willie wanted to proceed.

"Yes, a wonderful party, but while they were eating and laughing and talking, who should walk in at the window but Heavy Heart's big Angora Cat."

"Oh," quivered Willie. "Did the cat go for the mouse?"

"No, because Heavy Heart and the Mouse saw her, and Heavy Heart got up and took the Cat in her arms. The Mouse got down from his chair and started to go under the bed, but Heavy Heart told him to stay and he would be safe. Then Heavy Heart told the Cat that the Mouse was her friend, and that the Cat must be kind to the Mouse. Then she got another chair, and Heavy Heart and the Cat and the Mouse had another tea-party, all together. Now the five minutes are up and you must go to sleep, and when you wake up I'll tell you more about Heavy Heart and her friend the Mouse and the pet Cat."

Willie turned his face to the wall with a sigh.

"Kiss me nightie, Margery," he begged, and Margery kissed him, as she always did, whether it was night or day, when he was ready for sleep.

The Harmony Home for Waifs was recovering from an epidemic of measles. It had been a strenuous time, for all of the fifty small inmates save two had had the disease. Many of them were just getting well, and all were still in quarantine. Mrs. Meeghan, the matron, was "fair

fagged out," to use her own expression, and Miss Alice was more acid than usual.

It was in such a crisis that the Home appreciated Margery Heath. Margery had come to the Home when she was a very tiny baby. She was now one of the older girls, but of all the children who had lived in the big institution none had ever set the stamp of her character so surely and so securely on the life there as Margery.

Margery had been brought up in the more or less haphazard fashion that prevails in an endowed institution where the matron is the one important factor in the management. True, the Board of Trustees paid periodical visits, but then they spent most of the time listening to the reports given by the matron. Margery's matron was not the Mrs. Meeghan now in charge; the first matron had married a widower and had gone away to the West—even now she sometimes wrote Margery a letter, which Margery sometimes did not get, that is, if Miss Alice and Mrs. Meeghan saw it first. Fortunately, Margery had arrived at the point where she was indispensable in the office of the Home as well as in the various other sections of it, and as the mailman liked her bright smiles, he usually turned his bundle over to her if she chanced to be anywhere in sight.

Mrs. Meeghan did not love Margery, nor did Miss Alice. In a dozen little, mean and petty ways they hurt her. But none knew better than

they how much they needed her, and they kept their dislike—which was really only a form of jealousy—in the background, so that only Margery knew how they enjoyed giving her cause for little, almost intangible annoyances.

Margery had a wonderful disposition for a little girl. As a baby she had exhibited signs of unusual affectionateness. As she grew older she was the sunshine in a somewhat cloudy establishment, for, try as one will, an orphan asylum is sure to be a place of clouds and shadows. Margery, however, all unconsciously, helped to dispel the shadows, for she had a wonderful imagination; when she was four she made up stories as she played with the other children; the sight of a book would make her crow when she was only a baby, and in her childishly sweet way she managed to acquire a large amount of information at a very early age.

With the old matron Margery was a favourite in every sense of the word. The one regret that Mrs. Ross had when she left the Home, where she felt that she had been a slave, was that she must leave Margery. Could she have taken the child with her she would undoubtedly have done so, but the man she was marrying was not disposed to carry along anything more tangible than memories from an institution which he himself hated and despised.

Margery's heart was very sad when Mrs. Ross

went away. The child was then eight years old, and already she was the little mother of the place, where the children one and all called her "Trueheart Margery." The new matron tried to suppress her lively spirits, tried to check what she called the "story-telling craze" that seemed to have invaded the institution; she even went so far in the early days as to punish Margery for fancied sins of disobedience, but it was a trifle difficult and not a little tame to punish a child who would not open her mouth in "back talk," and who could smile just as sunnily as ever the moment the punishment was over. And then, too, it was the other children really who took Margery's punishment to heart, and Mrs. Meeghan found in her early days of residency that if she expected to control the children at all it must be with "hands off" where "Trueheart Margery" was concerned.

After that Mrs. Meeghan and Miss Alice decided that they might just as well use Margery, since she seemed to lend herself so well to using, and from then on Margery's duties became many and complicated, but the harder she worked the happier she seemed to be, and the brighter and more lovely in character she seemed to grow.

For one thing she was a healthy child in every way. Slenderly built, she was like a piece of live wire; you could bend her almost to breaking-

point, but back she would spring to a straightness that showed no signs of the bending.

It was Miss Alice who came up to Margery as she stood by Willie's little bed after kissing him "nightie."

"Petting that child again, I see," commented the sour-faced under-matron.

Margery smiled.

"He's such a tiny baby," she answered softly. "He needs so much mothering, Miss Alice."

"He doesn't need spoiling," the other stated crisply. "He shows signs of being hard to manage already, and it's your fault. However, that's Mrs. Meeghan's business, and I stopped to tell you that she wants you to do some typing down in the office."

Margery hesitated a fraction of a second.

"I'll go right away," she said, then. But she did not go at once. Instead, she went closer to Miss Alice, and looked up into the set face pleadingly. Margery's blue eyes could be very appealing, and with the golden curls dancing over her head she looked like a bit of fairyland made human.

"Don't you think, Miss Alice," she asked wistfully, "that you could like me a little better?"

Miss Alice started and frowned.

"Who said I disliked you?" she demanded.

"Oh, nobody," Margery hastened to explain,

"but you seem so stern and—and—well, short with me."

Miss Alice looked annoyed.

"You're a very persistent child," she replied. "If you would attend to your duties and not bother so much about what people think of you, it would be much better for you, I think."

"But don't you think that people need to be loved?" Margery wanted to know.

"There are other things than love in the world," Miss Alice snapped. "There is duty, for instance," she concluded pointedly.

Margery recognised defeat.

"I'll go do the typing," she said at once. "Thank you for telling me."

CHAPTER II

MARGERY'S SECRET

MRS. Meeghan looked up from her desk as Margery went into the matron's office.

"You were long coming," she complained.

"Willie was just ready to take his nap," Margery answered. "I don't think he's so well," she added, as she sat down at the typewriter desk.

"You make too much of that child," the matron declared. "He's all right, the doctor says, and I suppose he knows."

"He isn't quite happy," Margery began timidly.

"He'll get over that," the matron answered. "He'll be glad one day that he has food and clothes and a roof over his head."

"Yes," sighed Margery. "But he misses his mother. She must have loved him wonderfully. Mrs. Meeghan, why is it that mothers love their children so differently from the way other people do?"

"Now, Margery, I haven't the time to go into that sort of thing. I wish to goodness you'd stop

asking so many foolish questions. Here's a pack of work to be done—there's the new building plan, for instance; I have a letter from the Board saying that Mr. Gordon will be here to-morrow to go over the ground. He wants to inspect the present buildings, and I want everything to be shipshape before he comes. One never knows who else will turn up and be ready to find fault with the management or the arrangements. These newspapers have gotten so bold in their criticisms of establishments like this that it's all one can do to hold down the job of running an institution of any kind."

"Did you have letters for me?" inquired Margery, at once giving over her own thoughts and falling in with the matron's mood.

"No, reports to copy. I want these things all clear and straight in case I am asked for them."

Margery typed for an hour. She liked this work; it gave her a chance to use her mind, for Mrs. Meeghan left much of the real work in her hands, and considering the slender amount of schooling she had had, Margery did remarkably well. Her brain worked clearly and rapidly, and she brought to bear upon every task a common-sense unusual in so young a girl. For Margery was only fourteen.

Once during the progress of the work she had occasion to go to the desk for something, and there she saw the letter that had come from the

Secretary of the Board. The letter stated that Mr. Gerald Gordon would be at the Home on the following day to go over the premises.

Visitors were an event at the Home. There were very few of them outside the members of the Board, most of whom were elderly men. Margery let her imagination play about the name, Gerald Gordon. It sounded nice. Maybe for a change he would be a young man. Maybe he would bring some one else with him. Once, a good while ago, one of the Board had brought his niece to the Home. Margery would never forget her—she was so pretty; her frock was of bright blue silk and she wore a great bunch of fresh violets. Margery's one ambition from that time on in the matter of clothes was to own a bright blue silk dress.

Ever since, when there were violets in season, down in the woods, Margery would get all the children to pick as many as they could, and she would put them in tumblers all around the Home, until Miss Alice would scold at the dirt they made and declare that she wouldn't have another violet come into the place. But even Miss Alice did not dare throw the violets away until they had withered, but only Margery really understood the reason. To Margery the reason was clear—violets were made by God, and God put messages into their dewy hearts, and even Miss Alice did not dare disregard the messages. But Margery

never told anybody about the messages in the violets except Jane Crew, who was Margery's chum in the Home. Poor Jane was always in trouble, because she was by nature a rebel. It was she who told Margery much about the world outside the orphan asylum, because Jane had not come to the Home until she was ten, and she was rather sophisticated for ten at that. Jane hated the Home and the matron and Miss Alice and most of the children, but she loved Margery with a wild and passionate love. She told Margery that some day they would run away from the Asylum, and then she would show Margery how fine a world it was. But Margery was not given to escapades; she tried to curb Jane's wild impulses, and she exerted an influence over the other girl that served to keep her more than once from breaking out in hazardous exploits.

At the same time Margery was not left entirely unaffected by Jane's stories—Margery had her own moments of rebellion, which she kept to herself. She had her moments of longing, like the little Princess Heavy Heart, for the world outside those four high walls. She wondered if the time would ever come when she might go away and see some of the things and the people she had heard about. True, she had gone to school, but the rules about going and coming and about mingling with other children were so rigid, that Margery gained but slightly in actual experience

from the school periods. Indeed, other children in the school did not seem to desire to cultivate acquaintance with the "orphans," and so Margery and Jane had to keep to themselves.

But other girls and boys went away from the Home—after they were equipped with trades and were able to earn their own livings. Margery, however, knew that Mrs. Meeghan did not want her to learn any trade, nor to do anything that would take her from the home. Sometimes she dreamed that the day might come when she, Margery, would be the matron of the Home herself, and then she could do some of the things that she felt needed doing so badly; she could teach the children more about love and more about God.

Mrs. Meeghan didn't like to talk about God; she read the Bible as if she were performing a most disagreeable duty, and she invariably evaded all questions asked, showing impatience that any of the children should be interested in such a dull subject. But Margery went to church as often as they would spare her—strangely enough, most of the children were compelled to attend regularly, but Margery, who liked to go, was frequently needed in the Home. But when she did go she listened very attentively, and tried to remember afterwards all that the minister had said, because she did so want to understand about God. And in the evenings, when she had a few minutes

to read, she would take down the big Bible which was a part of the furniture of the Home, and read passages in it, and then learn them by heart so that she could repeat them after she got into bed.

Margery also had a secret—a wonderful secret that neither Mrs. Meeghan nor Miss Alice, nor even Jane Crew, knew about.

Every night before she went to bed Margery would contrive to take her one precious possession out of its hiding-place and hug it to her heart, often for hours. In these hours the child would dream, sometimes falling asleep in the midst of her dreams, but always instinctively guarding her treasure so that no one would see it even though she might be disturbed.

The thing that Margery cherished with such loving care was a gold locket and chain. When she was still a very little girl, Mrs. Ross, the old matron, had given the locket to the child. She had told her how she had worn it around her neck when she was brought to the Home. Mrs. Ross longed to be able to answer some of the child's questions about her mother, for as Margery grew up she asked questions. To comfort the little girl, in whom the matron recognised a fine sensitiveness that gave her reason to believe the child to have come from a family of refinement, she had let her have this one clue to her identity. Mrs. Ross had shown her how to open the locket

and had told her that she thought the picture in it must be one of Margery's mother.

Thereafter, the girl of the picture became Margery's secret friend and confidant. She had never shown the picture to a soul, and when the new matron came to the Home she had hidden the locket away so that no one had an idea that it existed.

How much of comfort and help Margery had derived from the pictured face of the girl Jean as Gerry had snapped it, she herself even did not realise. What wonderful possibilities that picture opened up to the lonely child, who earned and more than earned the meagre care and sustenance that she received in the orphan asylum. When her heart ached with the harshness of Mrs. Meeghan, and the severity so uncalled-for of Miss Alice, Margery would cry the ache away with the picture against her hot cheeks; when her little arms and legs hurt with the weariness of which she was too proud to complain, and complaint of which she knew would elicit no sympathy, Margery would kiss the face in the locket and dream of loving arms that might encircle her, and tender words that would encourage her, if only the girl in the locket were alive and could act and speak.

As Margery grew toward the age of the girl in the locket she began to feel an even closer bond of companionship. One day Margery chanced to

be looking at herself in a looking-glass. Looking-glass studies were not encouraged in the Home, but Margery was getting big enough to have a little pride in her looks. No one had ever told her that she was pretty, but Willie loved her fair soft curls, and one of the small boys, once when he was sick, had laid his little cheek against hers and had said, "Oh, Margery, your cheek feels so soft and so cool."

It was inevitable that some day Margery should awaken to a consciousness of her looks, and when she did, the first thought that struck was that her face looked familiar. It was not until a while later that she realised why this was so, and then it dawned on her that her own face was very like the face of the girl in the locket. Only, she felt sure that the girl in the locket had dark hair and most likely dark eyes, for even in the picture she gave the impression of being very dark. But her curls lay over her small head just as Margery's did, and her nose and her mouth were the same. Not that Margery appreciated these details exactly, but she saw more and more plainly that there was a strong and sure resemblance between her own face and the face of the picture. Therefore, it was not so much as a mother that Margery regarded the picture of Jean, but as a companion, a bosom friend, a chum, a possible playmate.

Margery had not the slightest notion of what her mother's name had been. In a way she hoped

vaguely that it was like her own. But in lieu of any real knowledge she decided to call her Chum.

"Dearest Chum," Margery would whisper in the dark. "We had a nice day to-day. Did you know that we weren't scolded once, and even Mrs. Meeghan was pleased that the children behaved so well at the table."

Or, before she said her prayers, Margery would confess to the picture,

"Darling Chum, I don't want to pray for the safety of Mrs. Meeghan. She is mean and disagreeable and hurts the little ones with her nasty ways. Would you pray for her?" anxiously. And then out of the darkness would come the memory of that smiling pictured face, and Margery would exclaim,

"Why do you always smile? Have you never been even a little unhappy? Oh, I wish you could talk; I wish you could hug me; I wish you could scold me a little. I want some one who loves me to scold—they don't love me here; only Willie loves me and maybe Jane, but Jane is bad and disobedient and ugly."

It was Jane who put it into Margery's head to run away from the Home.

But that was after Gerald Gordon's visit, a visit that was destined to work a great change in Margery's outlook upon life.

CHAPTER III

HOW GERRY CAME TO HARMONY HOME

GERALD came to the Home with one of the directors. He did not see much of any of the children; as a matter of fact he was not interested in the children. He was absorbed in his work of planning an addition to the Home and of making certain other alterations called for by the State authorities.

Margery was in the office, however, when the visitors arrived. But Margery knew how to efface herself, and she received scarcely a glance from either of the two men, who at once began going over some drawings and figures, and then departed to make an actual inspection of the spots under discussion. But Margery had a good chance to look at the visitors, and she was at once drawn to Gordon. Something in his clean-cut face, his strong mouth, with its suggestion of sweetness; his cultured voice, which was different from any voice Margery was accustomed to hear; his well-fitting clothes, and his fine, white, flexible hands, all fascinated Margery.

Without exception he was the youngest man

Margery had ever seen in the Home, and because he was young, with no grey in his hair, and an exuberance in his manner that showed him to be keenly alive and interested in living, Margery was attracted by him and to him.

It was after the work had all been gone over, and Margery was attending to duties in another part of the house, that she was called again to the office to find some paper missing from Mrs. Meeghan's desk.

"Where's that report?" asked the matron, somewhat impatiently. And Margery answered, without hesitation, in her clear, sweet voice,

"I'll find it. I put it in here," and opened a drawer from which she took out the paper.

Gerald Gordon stood by smiling.

"You have a youthful secretary," he commented.

"Yes," the matron replied grudgingly. "She'll do; better than none."

The director scowled, and just then Margery looked up and caught Gerald's eye. Unconsciously she smiled at him, and then, to her amazement, she saw that he was looking deadly white. And he was staring at her, not as a man stares at a child who has attracted his attention, but as one stares at something unexplainable, unbelievable, not possibly true.

"What is your name?" Gordon suddenly asked her.

"Margery," she replied politely, a little disturbed by his manner.

Gordon turned to the matron.

"Where did this child come from?"

The matron answered stiffly.

"I don't know, I'm sure. She was here when I came, and I understood that she was brought when a baby."

"Do you know her full name?" he questioned.

"Margery Heath is her name," Mrs. Meeghan showed signs of being none too well-pleased with the interrogation.

Gerald turned to the director.

"I must look into this, sir," he said. "The little girl is the image of a dear friend whom I lost sight of some years ago. How old are you, Margery?"

Margery told him fourteen.

"Jean's Margery would be fourteen. Come here," he said to the little girl.

Margery came and stood before him. Gerald looked into her face searchingly.

"You don't remember anything before you came to the Home, do you, Margery?"

"No, sir. Mrs. Ross said that I was a tiny baby, sir, and that I had on a beautiful little dress that was very dirty, but that was very pretty when it was washed, sir. And it had a name on it," Margery looked toward Mrs Meeghan.

"The name was Margery Craven Heath," the matron answered somewhat sulkily. Margery was receiving too much attention from this good-looking young man.

"Jean's Margery—in an orphan asylum." There was vague wonder in Gerald Gordon's voice. "Jean's little girl," his eyes seemed not able to leave the child's face, and his hands held her arms so tightly that they hurt. Margery looked at him in bewilderment, not daring to voice the words that crowded to her tongue. For here was some one who knew who she was, or seemed to, some one who must have known her mother. And her mother's name was Jean! But Margery did not dare tell about the locket. Life in an orphan asylum with people like Mrs. Meeghan make a child wise beyond its years. Margery had a touch of the craft that was a result of being so often put upon the defensive. She would not tell of the locket when Mrs. Meeghan was present.

Gerald turned to the director, who had been an interested onlooker.

"I must look into this," he repeated. "How do I go about getting this child away from here?"

The director considered. "I'm afraid that you would have to arrange to adopt her legally."

"I couldn't do that," Gerald answered. "Unless I'm mistaken this child has a grandfather living. I must see if I can find him. Margery,

I'm coming back, and when I come I hope to bring some very good news to you."

"Yes, sir," Margery replied breathlessly.

But here Mrs. Meeghan intervened.

"You can go now, Margery. Excuse her, sir, for there are many things to be done, you know, and we have kept Margery away rather long from her tasks."

Gerald frowned, but said nothing in answer.

Instead, he put out his hand and took Margery's in it.

"Good-day, little Margery," he said, and there was an indescribable tenderness in his voice. "I won't say good-bye, for I'm coming back, and when I come I hope it will be to tell you some very nice things."

"Thank you, sir," Margery answered, and slipped away.

That day the locket was carried to the river bank, where, for a half-hour, Margery lived ecstasies with it in her hand. Suddenly a new world had opened out before the child—a world of Gerald Gordons and Jeans, in which the Mrs. Meeghans were conspicuous for their absence.

But while Margery dreamed Mrs. Meeghan raged. It did not fit in with her plans to have Margery Heath taken from the Home. Margery was needed. Also, she was spoiled enough without this. Well, Miss Margery should see. If she

expected to begin to benefit at once by what had happened she would be sadly disappointed.

Thereupon Mrs. Meeghan decided that she wanted Margery at once, but when she called, the child could not be found. One of the small boys found her in the woods, and called her back to the Home. Margery came in with eyes shining and cheeks bright.

"Now you needn't think," Mrs. Meeghan greeted her, "that because that Mr. Gordon thought he knew you, that you're going to be let off from work and have a holiday. The chances are that the gentleman was mistaken anyway. There are plenty of Heaths in the world and you probably haven't a soul living related to you. So don't get your head up in the clouds and forget that you have to work a bit for your living. Here, now, are things that I want you to do, and I say that you'd better get at them and forget all about Mr. Gerald Gordon."

"But, oh, Mrs. Meeghan," Margery exclaimed, "wouldn't it be wonderful if I had a really truly grandfather?"

"Pshaw! If you had a grandfather he'd a-found you long before this."

Margery's face fell.

"But you think Mr. Gordon will come back?" Her voice pleaded for an affirmative answer.

Mrs. Meeghan sneered,

"He may come back, or he may not. There are

men in the world who would do more than claim to find relatives for a pretty girl who they've taken a fancy to," was her enigmatic reply. But the implication was lost upon Margery. Even in an orphan asylum, among Jane Crews, Margery had retained her sweet innocence. It was disappointment that hurt her now, and she took up her work with a heart that was strangely heavy. Suppose Mr. Gordon never came back? Margery had had a glimpse of something which she had unconsciously longed for. In school most of the girls had mothers and fathers; she had seen the glances of pity that were often enough directed toward her and the others from the Home by these more fortunate youngsters. Once or twice there had been school concerts and Margery had seen some of those mothers and had seen the affection that showed in every word and movement that passed between them and their children. Margery was made to be loved; her little heart was filled to bursting with a shy sweet tenderness, the real meaning of which she did not know. Within her something reached out toward some other unknown something; could she have analysed her feeling, she would have realised it to be the unconscious longing for affection and the demonstrations of affection.

Gerald Gordon had brought a new feeling into Margery's heart. It had seemed suddenly as if in some way she belonged to him. With him she

seemed to share some possession, of which the rest of the world knew nothing—what the possession was she could not say.

But whatever it was, from the day Gerald Gordon came to the Home, Margery was different. The things in the Home no longer completely absorbed her; she was guilty of day-dreaming in the midst of her performance of duty, and she became the object of continuous complaint and the victim of unabated scolding on the part of Mrs. Meeghan.

CHAPTER IV

HOW MARGERY CAME TO BE CALLED "TRUEHEART"

THERE was a story connected with the nickname that clung to Margery. It grew out of the little girl's gift for remembering stories and for inventing other stories for the delectation of the children in the home.

From the time Margery learned to read, she was happiest when she could have a book in her hand, or could be reading from a book to some of the smaller youngsters. In the Home there was a small library, not a very choice selection of books, but containing enough volumes of interest to little ones to give a child with a real taste for books a foundation upon which to work. And in school Margery's several teachers soon found the child exceptionally intelligent, and one of them, at least, tried to feed her very evident hunger for reading by lending her a few books that she believed would help to train her mind in the right directions.

Among the stories that Margery loved best was that of Richard the Lion-Hearted and the Crusaders. Her innate religious sense, which in the

circumstances was little likely to be developed, found a strong appeal in the idea of men fighting for a shrine. She could just barely appreciate the fact that there were certain principles in life which were great and strong and fine enough to fight for, and the heroic aspect of such fighting fired the child's imagination to the point where she might well at moments picture herself a miniature Joan of Arc. For the tale of the Maid of France was another of the stories that Margery learned and loved.

In the play hours, when the matron and Miss Alice were glad enough to have Margery take charge of the rest of the children, and to keep them entertained and quiet, Margery would reel off stories by the hour—stories that were a strange mixture, could one have analysed them, of fact and fiction, for to what she had read in her books, Margery made many and sometimes very original additions. It was during these story hours that the little girl conceived the idea of instilling a certain quality of knightliness into the boys, and giving a touch of heroism to the conduct of the girls by forming a kind of Crusaders' band. And not having a shrine to fight for, or a tangible object such as one could see, Margery planned a set of rules of conduct for politeness and truth-telling, the rewards for keeping which were more stories and more thrilling stories.

Mrs. Meeghan greatly disapproved of so much story-telling; but even she could not object to something that certainly did improve the manners of the older boys, that made them less rough in their play with the girls, and more obedient to herself; nor could she raise any serious obstacle in the way of the girls, who, for the sake of winning Margery's approval, adhered to the truth as they had never done before.

As for Margery, she was herself the very soul of honour. Truth was a part of her, and it was a continuous shock for her to hear other children deliberately tell falsehoods with regard to conduct and actions. And so emphatic did she become in her efforts to make her companions see the wrong of the things they did that some one in fun dubbed her "Truthful" Margery. Whereupon very seriously—for Margery's training had made her serious in many ways—Margery named her little band the Trueheart band, for, she said, "It isn't only a question of telling the truth; it's being truthful all through and through, just like being brave all through and through." So the Truehearts became the examples of good conduct and the practisers of perfect truthfulness in the Home, and gradually the name that covered them all devolved upon the originator in particular, and sometimes, mostly in play, but once in a while in derision, Margery was dubbed "Trueheart Margery."

It was the "Trueheart" band that gave Margery some concern when it came to keeping the secret of her locket. Open-hearted as she was, it was hard for her to reconcile to her ideals the practice of a deception which she felt entered into her conduct in this one particular. For a while she punished herself for the fancied wrong by not permitting herself to look at the picture in the locket, but gradually the thought grew in her that no good could be accomplished by telling of her treasure to Mrs. Meeghan, since the matron would not show any interest in the children's plans anyway, and was more likely to scold about being bothered than to thank her for making a confession.

When Gerald Gordon appeared at the Home and told Margery that he would return, the child became more than ever sure that she had better not say anything about the locket. When Mr. Gordon came back, and she had a chance to talk to him she would tell him, and if the picture was that of her mother, if it was the picture of Jean —Margery already loved the name by which Gerry had called her mother—he would know it.

CHAPTER V

GERRY HAS AN ACCIDENT

MEANWHILE a most unfortunate accident occurred, one that had a considerable bearing upon the future of Margery.

On the very day after Gerald Gordon had visited the Harmony Home his automobile skidded on a slippery street, and in the collision that resulted Gerry was seriously injured.

During the weeks that followed Gerald lay in one of the city hospitals and hovered between life and death. There were hours when he played on the lawn at "TIMBERVALE" with Jean; when he made love to Jean in the old orchard; when he begged Jean to come back to him, and spoke of her as being a long way off. Of Jean's daughter he remembered nothing; indeed, it was not until he was well on the way toward recovery that he began to recall the incidents which had been occupying most of his attention about the time the accident occurred.

In the end there had to be an operation—a rather delicate one—and after that came a period when the greatest possible amount of rest needed to be secured. When finally his mind, readjust-

ing itself, veered back to his visit to the Harmony Home, it came to him with a shock that he had left a little orphan girl, whom he believed to be Jean's child, with a promise unfulfilled about returning to her, and at once he sought means of getting in touch with the Home, to inquire about Margery.

To his astonishment he learned that the child was no longer at the Home; that she had disappeared, and that the search which was being made for her had thus far proved fruitless.

In his anxiety for the girl's welfare, Gerald suffered a setback, but as soon as he was able to do anything again he arranged to leave no stone unturned in a search for Margery. He now also started to investigate the movements of the Heaths after their marriage, with the hope that he might gain some light on the mystery of the death of Jean and apparently of her husband, Raymond Heath.

Among other things, too, he sought "Richard Dale's" publishers and tried to learn something of the whereabouts of Craven. This, however, was again a vain hope, for the publishers knew nothing; while at "TIMBERVALE" everything lay in the calm mystery of silence that had wrapped itself around the old house from the moment John Gordon had closed it upon the departing servants, after Richard Craven had gone away fourteen years ago.

Two clues, however, did result from Gerald's activities. One was provided by the now ancient Thomas, once Richard Craven's manservant and still living on his former master's bounty, but serving in the home of the Gordons since Craven's departure. Gerry had spent little time in his old home after the death of his father, but he left it open and in the care of a couple of trusted servants of whom Thomas was one. The story Thomas told Gerry was this:

On one of the days which Thomas had spent in town, while Gerry was in the hospital and the old servant was greatly worried over his condition, there had come to the door of Gerald's home a middle-aged man, with white hair, a sort of genteel tramp, who inquired for John Gordon. On being told that John Gordon was no longer alive, he inquired for Gerry, and had been told of the accident. He had seemed greatly upset, but he had been seen in the neighbourhood of "TIMBERVALE" a little later, and had been taken for a vagrant. That the man was Richard Craven Gerry had not a doubt, and it filled him with exasperation to think that Craven had been so nearly within his reach only to disappear again as completely as ever.

The other clue came in the form of a farmer, who, with a great deal of embarrassment, called on Gerry at his office, in answer to an advertisement that Gerry had put in the newspaper seek-

ing news of Margery Craven Heath or Jean Heath.

The farmer's name was Warren, and he told Gerry how, on a certain day over thirteen years ago, he had found a dying woman, with a young child, on the roadside, and had turned her over to the care of a passing doctor who had taken her to the hospital, where she died. He produced, as substantiation of his story, a small bundle. The tiny garments in the bundle made Gerry's heart skip a beat, for now he learned for a certainty that the child had been sent to the Harmony Home. Therefore the little Margery of the Home was Jean's child, and now Gerald could not content himself until he had located Margery.

Needless to say, Gerry was most grateful to Jim Warren, though he blamed him a little for not having sent Margery's things to her long ago. But Jim's wife had died, and looking at him, Gerry had to pity the big clumsy fellow so evidently in sorrow, and yet in his awkward fashion so keen to help in the search for the girl whom he remembered as a chubby baby asleep on a hot road, in the arms of an almost dead mother, many years ago.

At the Home, whither Gerry immediately went, Mrs. Meeghan received him coldly. In a way she blamed the loss of Margery on this interfering young man.

"She was dissatisfied from the moment you

left here," she said, in a grieved tone of voice. "There was no getting on with her at all. Sometimes for hours she would be away nobody knew where, and when we found her she was moping off in a corner down by the river and all one could get out of her was, 'Has Mr. Gordon Come?' "

All of which was not calculated to make Gerry feel any better. Also, he scented a bit of mystery in the woman's manner, and began to suspect that perhaps Margery had had cause suddenly to hate the Home and to be very anxious to go where there was no Mrs. Meeghan. In which surmise he was not so far wrong.

However, the thing to do now was to find the child, and Gerald combined his efforts with those of the Home authorities to seek out some trace of her.

CHAPTER VI

HOW MARGERY RAN AWAY

IF any one had told Margery that she would actually run away from Harmony Home she would not have believed them. Jane Crew had suggested their running away one time for a lark, but larks of that sort scarcely appealed to Margery, who was an earnest little soul and looked upon her duties in the Home as being of serious import.

With the coming of Gerry Gordon, however, Margery found herself seeing things with new eyes. Inside her she felt an unusual disturbance; she was restless, she was at the high pitch of expectancy. She knew just enough of the world outside the Home to want to know more, and with the sudden prospect of being taken away from the Orphanage and of coming into contact with people who really belonged to her, there opened up before Margery a whole new vision of what a little girl's life might be under different conditions.

What dreams she dreamed of Gerry Gordon as her deliverer in those days, Gerry himself would

never know. What dreams she entertained of a grandfather who would love her; who would tell her about her mother and her mother's life, no one even suspected.

But as the days went by, and Gerald Gordon failed to return, Margery's heart sank. She no longer had the same interest in life; her duties in the Home became irksome. Mrs. Meeghan grew more and more harsh, partly because Margery was no longer the same convenient little machine that she had been; and whereas she had formerly found it impossible to complain of the child, she now found fault with her continuously.

Then came the blow that made Margery's happiness in the Home impossible.

One day a beautifully dressed young woman came to the Orphanage. There had been preparations made for her visit, but Margery had been kept in the dark about it all. For the young woman came to adopt a baby, and the baby to be adopted turned out to be Willie.

When Margery learned that Willie was to leave the Home, she suffered the agonies of a mother from whom her only child is being taken away by force. Her tears distressed young Mrs. Grant greatly.

"Willie is going to be very happy," she tried to explain to Margery. "He will have everything that a little boy could want, and will have the best of care also."

"But who will love him?" wept Margery. And the tears came into Mrs. Grant's eyes as she answered, very gently, "Why, I will love him. And my husband will love him. You see, we had a little boy of our own, but God saw fit to take him. I want Willie to fill the empty place in my heart that Johnny left there."

Margery's tender little heart received the appeal. She made no further fuss about Willie's going. But the ache inside of her, when she saw him driven away in the big automobile, was such that nothing seemed able to help. For two days she was actually ill, and then Mrs. Meeghan's scoldings stung her to action. She picked herself up, and went back to her routine work in the Home, but it was not the same Margery. Years had been added to her, and her little face was white and drawn, while the tears were perpetually near the surface, and the effort of will that she made to hold them back only served to make matters worse, for the choke in her throat made it impossible for her to eat; at night she lay awake conquering the sobs, and now she found no comfort in the picture in the locket. She let it lie in its hiding-place, and for a time looked out into the future hopelessly.

But Margery was naturally a child of resource. Not for very long could her imagination and mind lie idle. One night a wonderful thought came to her. Suppose the lady who had adopted Willie

would take her, Margery, as a nurse for Willie? Wouldn't that be beautiful? Her heart beat excitedly over the mere idea.

If only it had been kind Mrs. Ross with whom she had to deal! Would she dare make such a suggestion to Mrs. Meeghan? No, of that Margery was sure. How then could she find out if Mrs. Grant would have her? That was when Margery really determined to get away from the Home, and she pursued the idea by hunting up Mrs. Grant's address.

From then on until the time she really packed up her few small belongings, Margery lived for only one thing. And that was to slip away without any one knowing and get out of the reach of the Home authorities and into Mrs. Grant's presence as quickly as possible.

Of course it was much easier to plan than to do. There were few times when Margery could get enough freedom to make her escape from Mrs. Meeghan. Also, once away, how could she find Mrs. Grant? She had the address, it was true, but she knew that the place was some distance off. She had no money; she would have to walk, and it was as likely as not that she might lose her way.

But of all this Margery determined not to think. She would go, and somehow she would find Mrs. Grant and Willie.

So she made ready, and one night lay awake

hour after hour waiting for the first glimmer of dawn. Then she crept down the stairs like a thief, hugging her precious little bundle, containing a few clothes and a single sandwich,—the locket on its chain clasped about her neck,—and let herself out of the kitchen door of the Home. Quietly she stole down the path to the big gate, knowing just where she could climb the wall that ran around the Home. It was not the first time she had done this, though before it had been for fun; now she made the effort with beating heart and red cheeks, and heaved a wonderful sigh when she dropped into the soft grass on the other side.

She knew about the time the milk boy would be along with his wagon, and he was her friend. She would ask him to take her for a part of the way, so that she could place as great a distance as possible between her and the Home that day.

Presently, sure enough, the milk wagon came in sight. Margery remained hidden while the boy took out the trays of bottles and arranged them in the place where an hour or so hence the kitchen maid would come to find them. Then, as he made ready to get back into his wagon, Margery started up and intercepted him.

"Hello, Margery," he said, exhibiting due astonishment.

"Don't talk so loud," Margery cautioned. "Listen, Bill, I'm running away. I want you to let me ride a bit on your wagon. Please take me,"

she pleaded, as she saw him hesitate. "I'll ride in the back as quiet as a mouse and you can put me down somewhere so that I can start walking to Mrs. Grant's." Then followed a hurried story of where she intended to go.

The boy found it hard to resist Margery. He was doubtful about the transaction, but the fact that she had the address of Mrs. Grant helped to decide him. In the end, he let the little girl climb into the back of his wagon, and by the time his rounds were finished Margery was some six miles away from the Home.

Bill tried to give her general directions as to the road she should take, but he told her that she must expect that the Home people would be on her trail very shortly, and that if she did not wish to be caught, she had better keep pretty well in hiding. Taking it all in all, Bill felt as if he ought to go with the girl until he knew that she was safe, but he was not a free agent, and to his proposal that she hide somewhere until he could come for her, Margery would not listen. Now that she was fairly started on her adventure she was determined to carry it through herself, and armed with Bill's directions, she felt sure that she could reach Mrs. Grant's house by the same night. Not being a timid child, Margery had no fear of the road, and she was intelligent enough to see that if she could escape the vigilance of the Home people long enough to get to Mrs. Grant's, she

would certainly be able to get away for good one way or another.

So it was that a little girl, with an old straw hat crushed down on her head, and a small bundle under her arm, trudged along the dusty road, her feet moving fast under the inspiration of the dreams that filled her head—of seeing Willie, of finding Gerald Gordon, and perhaps of finding a mysterious personage who would be the talked-of grandfather, the one human being in all the world who really belonged to her.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN CRAVEN GOES TO "TIMBERVALE"

RICHARD CRAVEN and the dog Roderick found the world around them growing daily more lovely as they followed the highroad under early Summer skies of deepest blue, and drank in the sun-warmed breezes that stirred the young green leaves and dried the dew on the opening wild-flowers.

Craven felt in himself a new impulse to live, and the dog waxed frisky. Now and then they met a farmer on the road, and exchanged a pleasant good-day with him; quite often an automobile passed them, and the occupants almost invariably noted the tall figure who strode with remarkable vigour, whistling to his dog to avoid the passing machine.

Only a close examination of Craven's face would have betrayed the tumult still raging within him, but growing hourly less disturbing as the cool hand of Nature brought soothing to his sore soul, and the miracle of Nature began to displace his restless musings on matters for which there seemed no immediate help.

Deep down in his heart Craven knew that his steps were inevitably tending to a scene now long in the past. He would not consciously acknowledge that the city was drawing him, nor would he let himself dwell on the possible condition of the old home at "TIMBERVALE." It was not "TIMBERVALE" for which he longed, but if "TIMBERVALE" could yield the secret that he yearned to know, then to "TIMBERVALE" would he go.

It was characteristic of this man of moods, however, that he should not make directly for that ultimate destination. It was characteristic that he should play with the thought of what he might find there; that he should build up a fabric of the imagination that should prepare him for the kind of action he must presently take. He must find excuses for himself, and reasons for others; it never occurred to him that the changes which had failed to happen in his own case might have brought undreamed-of transformations in the lives and persons of his family and friends.

At fifty-five he was hale and vigorous; his face was little different from that time when he stepped from his automobile into the family circle at "TIMBERVALE," and took John Gordon's hand again after thirteen years. His hair was white, and there were a few new lines around the mouth and eyes; save for that, he was the Richard Craven of fourteen years ago, who had driven his daughter away with words of anger and threats

of future punishment. His life had been so simple; so full of the perfect balance of physical exercise and mental effort that time sat lightly on him. What he suffered he suffered under control, save for those brief periods when he gave himself up to the indulgence of anger and grief.

Had Craven been living in daily contact with those who loved him, and who would have had the patience to watch him, there would have been discovered in him, however, a very real though very subtle change. With the years that had gone by since he left "TIMBERVALE" for the second time, there had come a new development in his books. It was five years after the marriage of Jean that the first "Richard Dale" book for a number of years appeared, and the world wondered and the critics talked about that book. Since then there had been three more books, and with the publication of each had come speculation. But it remained speculation, for "Richard Dale" continued to be a mystery. In all those years he had communicated but once with his publishers; while his granddaughter slaved in an orphanage, a fortune accumulated in the bank awaiting the claims of its owner. But its owner had need for only a modest amount of money; the luxuries he permitted himself as a matter of course could be purchased for a comparatively small price. But on his own affairs he kept a padlock of silence to open which there had been found no key.

To Richard Craven had come a gradual experience that found its expression only in the work of "Richard Dale." It was a slow softening of the hardness that had been as iron in the soul; it was the gradual mellowing of memories until they had become as the glamorous dreams of a wonderful past. There were long periods when Richard Craven forgot all save the picturesqueness of his sorrows; there were long periods between such outbursts as that which had come to drive him once more from the little vine-clad cottage on the edge of the woods.

And now, as he followed the road, he found himself at moments almost carefree. The real facts of life faded to insignificance; only the trees and the grass and the flowers were real, and he was not a middle-aged man, but a spirit suddenly set free; he was young with the youth that thrills to the marvellous call of Spring.

There came into his soul these days a strange content. He felt a new glow of optimism. He did not realise that it was the habit of selfishness that had been little by little melting away. Not that it would all melt—in men like Craven selfishness never or rarely turns to unselfishness—but it was the modification of a rockbound egotism yielding to the larger forces of Nature and God, and shifting away the foundations on which selfishness is built.

So it was that the new Craven went on toward

the city, stopping at nights in roadside inns and village taverns, for the weather was not yet warm enough to make camping-out at night wholly safe. Therefore Craven maintained his outward aspect of respectability, paid his way as he went, ate his sandwiches at noon in the shelter of trees, but slept at night in a bed; then, with the collie, went tramping off again.

But coming into the city, he grew confused. His pose of respectable vagabond would not hold here; he knew something of the embarrassment of Rip Van Winkle; he made a decision quickly, and found himself on the way to "TIMBERVALE." And he walked with the dog that day over the road that Jean had walked with aching limbs and fast-failing strength of body; he passed the spot where Jean had lain dying, and where the baby Margery had been rescued by the kindly doctor. A watchful Providence, indeed, hid these things from him, as, almost happy, he went on to the place where he felt sure he would learn something of Jean.

Then he experienced a shock. The servant at the house of his old friend, John Gordon, told him that John Gordon was dead. And Gerry lay unconscious in a hospital. Now fear began to assail Craven; if all this could happen while he lived his simple, peaceful life, what might not have happened to Jean? There came to him in a flash the vision of a horrible but quite possible truth—

Jean might be dead! And fight it as he would, the conviction seemed to grow upon him, as if in result of some strange intuition, that Jean was dead.

Richard Craven no longer walked with his head high. He no longer saw the wonders of the world about him; instinctively he turned his footsteps toward "TIMBERVALE," and within his own grounds gazed with eyes grief-stricken on the weather-beaten house, with its air of hopeless neglect, standing there, a monument to his colossal failure to do his duty in the world of men.

For the first time in his life Richard Craven stood self-revealed. In that instant he hated himself, but the old man was not yet lost; for he hated Heath and he hated Gerry Gordon, even Gerry whom he had loved. Why had not Gerry looked after "TIMBERVALE"? If John Gordon was dead, then Gerry stood in his father's place. And though Gerry knew that Richard Craven lived, as he must know, still, legally "TIMBERVALE" was his. And this was the way he had treated it.

Then a possible explanation flashed through Craven's mind. What would have been Gerry's natural action if Jean were alive? Would he not have given "TIMBERVALE" to her? If Jean were in trouble wouldn't Gerry be looking after her? Jean was dead—the words screamed them-

selves into Craven's ears; they blazed themselves before his eyes—Jean was dead!

It was an older man who walked out of the gates of "TIMBERVALE." He did not whistle to the dog, though the faithful collie followed him without the customary signal.

Craven went in a daze. Unconsciously he longed for the shelter of his arbour of clematis vines, for the cool little study in the tiny cottage on the edge of the woods, where he might think, where he might puzzle out this problem which had been thrust upon him unexpectedly. He found it hard to absorb the knowledge that had come to him; he was afraid of the still further knowledge that might come. He must have time to study it all out, before he could act upon the facts in hand. Something in him urged that he must come back and make his place again in the world, and so take every means possible to find out the truth about Jean; but his soul shrank from such a step; he felt shy of men; he hated the sight of "TIMBERVALE," with its air of reproach; he could not bear to think of what might happen inside of him should he find Jean dead and Heath alive. He might be impelled to do murder.

Where were the sun and the brightness of the flowers? Where was the youth that had been singing in his heart? He was tired; he felt old; he knew himself for a man well on in middle-age; like John Gordon he would presently die. He

shuddered, and something of the old Craven stirred in him. Why not make an end to himself, instead of waiting for age and decay to mar and blemish and at last kill? Or, again, why let these fears and torments haunt? Nobody knew where he was; nobody need know. He could go back to his cottage and live again as he had lived before. Not quite like that, some Voice within him whispered. But if he could forget—once more that refuge of the moral coward—if he could forget, then, with the dog and the open road, and the safe haven of the cottage, he could go on, and win back youth and pride and heartsomeness. He would go home for a rest, that much at least he could decide upon. And so he and the collie started to retrace the way along which they had but recently come, so full of energy and with such high hopes.

Oddly enough, the kindly God who watches over even the Richard Cravens of the world, and is at pains to win them, was at work with the sole source of consolation for Craven's woes. For even as Craven moved along the road in one direction, a small girl came trudging along from another. In the meeting of these two lay the salvation of the head of the house of Craven.

CHAPTER VIII

A LITTLE GIRL ON A LONELY ROAD

MARGERY sang softly to herself as she blithely went her way. With the happy confidence of childhood she put the Home and Mrs. Meeghan and Miss Alice behind her and hurried on to Willie and Mrs. Grant.

At noon she ate her sandwich and stopped at a farmhouse to ask for a glass of water.

"Whar you goin', little girl?" the farmer's wife asked, not unkindly.

Margery smiled happily.

"I'm going to see Willie," she answered frankly.

"He your brother?"

"Oh, no, I haven't any brother. He's Willie Grant now; he used to be just Willie, when he was in the Orphan Asylum."

"You from the Orphan Asylum?" questioned the woman sharply.

Margery suddenly remembered that in her sense of joyous freedom she had said something she had better have left unsaid. Her native shrewdness came to her aid.

"I was, but I'm going to be Willie's nurse. You

see I took care of him before and I think I can make a satisfactory nursemaid."

The child's evident sincerity, and her grown-up manner of expressing herself, served to disarm the woman of her suspicion that this girl was a runaway. She offered her something to eat, and directed her on her way.

But Margery did a little thinking after she left the farmhouse. It would be noon, or even later, she felt sure, before a hue and cry would be raised about her absence from the Home. They were used to her stealing away lately, and they would think she was just mooning about somewhere. But by afternoon or early evening they would be searching for her. She must make better time. She tried to reckon the distance, and still believed that she could reach Grants' by night. In fact, she began to realise that she must get there to-night, for she dared not stop anywhere else. The prospect of a night alone on the road did not look inviting; indeed her feet were beginning to ache, and since she had refused the food offered her at the farmhouse, she was also somewhat hungry. Yet she had been afraid to stay and eat, for she saw that the woman was suspicious. And for the first time she realised that if the Home people found her they could compel her to go back.

The very thought of returning to the Home lent new speed to Margery's tired feet, but with each mile she was growing more weary and more lone-

ly, and the tears were getting closer to the surface.

As the afternoon progressed, Margery became more and more conscious of weariness. Twice she had to sit down and rest, and once she did indulge in a little cry. But the thought of seeing Willie heartened her, and she got up with fresh determination to go faster.

But now she found herself afraid of every shadow. The sound of an approaching automobile would send her into hiding; several times she hurried by people on the road, answering their salutations with the briefest of nods.

Once she lost her way by taking the wrong turn in the road. She had to ask a small boy to tell her how to get back to the right turn. He was a chubby little fellow of about eight, and he was much interested in a can of worms which he had been preparing to take down to the creek to fish with.

"You know how to fish?" he wanted to know.

"A little," Margery answered.

"Wanta come an' fish with me?" he inquired politely.

"I haven't time," Margery responded. "I have a long distance to go."

"Why don't you ask one of those auto fellows to pick you up and carry you part of the way? That's what I do when Ma sends me after butter," declared the youngster.

Margery considered.

"Perhaps I will after a little," she temporised. "If you'll just show me the right turn, I'll hurry along."

So the small boy pointed the way, and with a few more admonitions let her go.

It was well on in the afternoon when the wonderful thing happened. For Margery's dreams were to come true, it seemed, all at once.

CHAPTER IX

THE FAIRY OF THE KIND DEED

WHERE the birds sang in a bit of thick woods off the main-travelled road, the Vagabond sat down to rest. The soft purl of the sun-warmed brook cheered him; a fat, friendly grey squirrel begged a few stray crumbs from him.

With the collie curled up beside him, the Vagabond took a sandwich from his pocket, and, sharing it with the dog, ate it slowly. Then he dipped a folding cup into the stream and slaked his thirst, while the dog helped himself from a similar source, getting comfortably wet with the operation.

Craven was tired and a little footsore, something new for him. But he was calmer than he had been for three days. Another hour's tramp and he would reach the cottage; it was yet three hours till sundown; he would rest a bit and take a nap. So he and the collie both fell asleep under the shade of a big tree.

A giant yellow and black butterfly presently hove into view. She floated lightly around the grey head, and then settled for an instant on the

knee of the Vagabond. And at that instant Craven had a dream. It was a fairy that stood upon his knee and said to him:

"You're getting to be an old man, now," in a voice that held more than a hint of reproach. "But what have you ever done in the world that has been of real use to anybody? You have spent your days wandering idly, absorbed in your own selfish thoughts; you have hugged to your heart your selfish sorrows and have pursued your selfish ambitions. The only things you have really been kind to have been the birds and the flowers. Perhaps you don't know it, but they love you, and and they want to help you. They want you to have the human love that should belong to you. But in order to have this, you must give up being so entirely selfish. You must do a kind deed every day."

The butterfly flew on, passing from grass blade to shrub and from shrub to flower. The Vagabond went on sleeping. The fairy was no more, but the dream was clear in his heart.

Then it was that the Little Girl walked into the woods. She saw the old man, as he seemed to her, sleeping, and at first she started to run away. Then she stopped and went closer to him. Maybe her grandfather would be just such an old man. There was a look almost of sweetness on the fine features of Craven, for he was still with the Fairy of Kind Deeds.

While the Little Girl watched the Vagabond, he woke up. He looked at the Little Girl and she looked at him.

"Did you see a fairy?" he inquired whimsically.

"Which fairy?" Margery knew so many fairies, you know.

"Why, my fairy, of course," the Vagabond replied. "I guess we'll have to call her the Fairy of Kind Deeds."

"Oh, I know that fairy," Margery answered. "She lived in the Home." Then she looked a little frightened; she wished that she wouldn't always tell people about the Home.

But the Vagabond paid no attention to her last remark. He was looking at her very queerly.

"Who are you, Little Girl?" he asked, almost in a whisper.

Why, she never quite knew, but Margery's caution vanished. Without the slightest hesitation she told this tramp the truth.

"I'm Margery Heath," she said, and stopped, for the Vagabond's face grew so strange that it frightened her. He was scrambling to his feet, and his knees were trembling. He came over to her and caught her by the arm. She gave a little gasp that was near a sob.

Craven realised before it was too late that he was frightening the child out of her wits.

"Don't be afraid," he said, in a gentle tone.

"But tell me who you are and where you come from. You look like Jean and you said your name was Heath."

"Why," exclaimed Margery, an inspiration coming to her, "maybe you're my grandfather!"

Craven for once was at a loss.

"Where did you come from?" he repeated.

Then Margery told him all about the Home and Gerald Gordon and Mrs. Grant, and her wish to find Willie and to be a nurse to him, and how Mr. Gordon had said that he believed that she had a grandfather, and how she had hoped that she might find her grandfather, because she had never had any one who really belonged to her, and surely a grandfather would be her very own. When she reached this point she realised that the somewhat shabby old man, with the beautiful white hair, was crying, and all of a sudden Margery felt very sorry for him, and was afraid that she had hurt him in some mysterious way.

"You are crying," she said, with her odd simplicity. "I'm sorry if I made you cry."

And then Richard Craven did a thing that must have made the angels in Heaven rejoice over him. He put his arms around the little girl, and held her close to him, while he let the wonderful feel of a deep love born of loss and longing surge into his soul.

"Jean's Margery," he whispered. "Thank God,—at last,—Jean."

Jean was dead, yes, Jean was dead. He had wronged her; for as long as he lived he would pay for that wrong. But she had left him something with which to right the wrong. He would love this child as he had never loved Jean. For she spoke in the voice of her grandmother, and she looked at him out of eyes that were not in the family of Craven—blue, blue eyes, as clear as sapphires and as soft as violets. She was his—his—his.

CHAPTER X

THE RUINED COTTAGE

TO Richard Craven Margery showed her treasure, the locket. She sensed the truth that the picture in the locket would tell more of a story to her newly found grandfather than anything else could. Craven looked at the monogram and knew that Jean had not foresworn her father's name—the "C" stood for Craven; she had called her child Margery Craven.

But when the locket was opened and the face of Jean looked out at him, with its blithesome girl smile, Craven covered his eyes. He sat still for so long that Margery was frightened. She put out her hand and touched him timidly. When he looked up at her, his eyes were filled with tears.

"She was my daughter, little girl," he said, very sadly. "And she was your mother. Some day I will tell you all that is making me so sorrowful. Perhaps when you know you will not think so well of your grandfather, but I couldn't know that things would happen this way."

Margery sought to comfort him as best she could.

"I think you must always have been kind," she said simply.

Craven groaned; her faith in him hurt more than his own self-reproach.

However, the sun showing signs of getting ready to set; Craven came back to the practicalities of the situation. He had gathered that the Home people might even now be searching for Margery; they must not find her until he had established, beyond a doubt, his claim upon her. They must get to the cottage; there they would be safe for the night; in the morning he would get in touch with a lawyer and have the whole matter settled. Then he could look the future in the face again.

He told Margery of the cottage on the edge of the woods. It would take time to explain to her all the peculiarities of his own position, therefore he let explanations alone. They set out hand in hand, both tired physically, and Craven worn out with the emotions which, in the past few months, had wracked him and had culminated with the events of this afternoon.

But now one of the hardest blows that the man had ever suffered awaited him. They walked on for the most part silently for a half-hour. Then Craven pointed out to Margery where the cottage lay, and they both hastened their steps toward what appeared such a welcome refuge. But as they drew near, Craven felt something

wrong; he did not see the chimney of the cottage in the place where it should be. He felt a sudden panic seizing him—suppose that in his absence something had happened to his little home?

Suddenly they came upon the burned ruins of the cottage. Craven stood numb before the sight. He was suddenly old and feeble—the fight gone out of him; strength of mind and body leaving him. Margery watched him in silence and distress; she did not know what to do. In the west the sun was a great, gleaming sphere of gold; against its vivid light the charred bits of the cottage, with the background of fine old trees, stood out in high relief. But the golden sun meant that the night was coming; they were out in the open, without protection and without shelter. Margery wondered what they would do. Then she saw Craven stagger, and she helped him to a seat on a tree stump that had once served as a garden seat.

The dog whinnied and whined; he was perplexed, but he wanted to be of comfort to his master. Craven paid no heed to him; in fact, the man seemed dazed. He kept calling Margery "Jean," and Margery realised that he was not quite himself.

All at once Margery heard the toot of an automobile horn on the road. Quick as thought, she ran through the garden and out to the road. She

was just in time to hail a passing machine. The automobile stopped, and then, to Margery's amazement, she saw that it was Mrs. Grant in the machine, and she heard a dear, familiar voice calling,

"Margery, Margery, Mamma, it's Margery!"

Mrs. Grant was kindness itself as she listened to the slightly incoherent tale that Margery told, but she gathered that some one whom Margery spoke of as her grandfather was in need of immediate help. She got out of her car, and telling the chauffeur to come with her, she put Margery in charge of Willie, and hurried toward the place where Craven still sat.

That the man on the tree stump was really ill, Mrs. Grant saw at a glance. The cottage told its own story. As a matter of fact, the Grants lived close by and knew about the fire, the origin of which was a mystery. Also, Mrs. Grant had heard something of the recluse who lived in the cottage, and who was reputed to be a vagabond with a strange history. Craven had not lived in the cottage for some years without arousing curiosity, and gossip had it that he was not all that he seemed; it had been hinted that he was in reality a rich and a famous man.

But Mrs. Grant could not now go into the question of Craven's past, or of his relationship to Margery: she must get both of them to a place of shelter, and certainly the man looked as if he

needed a doctor. She directed the chauffeur to help Craven to the car and drive them straight home.

The estate of the Grants' was less than ten minutes' drive, and there at the house they found Mr. Grant, a kindly gentleman, somewhat older than his wife, but very able in handling an emergency. In less than an hour Craven was comfortably installed in a guest-room; the doctor had been brought and Margery had had a chance to explain a little more clearly her part in the proceedings. Mrs. Grant shared the little girl's happiness in her discovery of her grandfather; and was glad to be able to assure her that though the doctor considered Craven's condition somewhat serious, he gave every reason to believe that care and a little time would bring him around all right. A nurse was secured, and Mr. Grant aided his wife in making Margery see that she and her grandfather were entirely welcome. As for Willie, the arrival of his beloved Margery was a big event, and he was happier than he had been since he left the Home. This in itself was a source of joy to his adopted parents.

That very night Mrs. Grant wrote a letter to Gerald Gordon. For she knew Gerald slightly, and from Margery's tale she gathered that Gerald was perhaps the one to clear up all the minor points in the mystery of Margery's life.

CHAPTER XI

GERRY GOES TO "GREEN KNOLL"

GERRY GORDON read Mrs. Grant's letter through twice.

His breakfast lay untasted before him. The news in the letter was the biggest news he had received in years; Margery was found; Richard Craven was with her; all the missing links in the chain were supplied with the exception of Heath, and nobody cared about him anyway.

Gerry 'phoned within a half-hour to the Harmony Home. His message set up a great to-do in the place where a mystery was unusual and the solving of a mystery such as this involving Margery was almost too strange to seem possible.

"I always knew the child had good blood in her," declared Mrs. Meeghan. "And to think she in this Orphan Asylum and her grandfather a rich man."

"I wonder if she'll ever come back and see us," sighed Miss Alice, suddenly grown sentimental over this bit of romance that was "just like a story book."

"She ought to be grateful to us for the things

we did for her," maintained Mrs. Meeghan. "She ought to bring that rich grandfather here with a few presents for us."

Among the children the story was soon being whispered. It created a nine days' sensation, and all looked forward to the reappearance of Margery as the proverbial heiress.

But Margery did not come. In those days she was otherwise occupied. For her grandfather's life had to be saved, and Margery gave up her time and her thoughts and her constant prayers to the effort being made.

Gerry Gordon went straight out to "Green Knoll," the Grants' place. He was excited beyond measure at the turn events had taken. He was also filled with an unaccountable desire to see Margery, to make sure that all was well with her; he did not feel so anxious about seeing Craven, but he hoped that perhaps it would be a different Craven now that Margery was come.

But Gerald was not prepared for the change that the last few weeks had made in Craven. Of course he could not know how recent were those changes—he attributed them to the remorse of years, and his heart went out in pity to "Uncle Dick." Now he felt less resentful of the behaviour of Jean's father to her, and believed that Craven had repented of his harshness. It could not bring Jean back—no repentance could—but if it served to give Jean's daughter her rightful

place in Craven's heart, then perhaps even so great a sacrifice as Jean had had to make would be justified.

To Gerry Margery was shy, but her gentle winsomeness made a stronger appeal even than before to him. She was like Jean, and yet she was so different from Jean—there was no wilfulness, no little air of independence, no demand for homage in this child of the Orphanage, as there had been in the spoiled and self-willed Jean Craven. Unconsciously Gerry made comparisons, and though his loyal heart would not actively compare to Jean's detriment, yet his fine manliness could not help responding to what was a sweet but as yet undeveloped womanliness in Margery. Her tender regard for her grandfather; her loving thoughtfulness for little Willie, even when she was consumed with anxiety for Craven; her involuntary consideration for her host and hostess, both of whom had been immediately won to her, all indicated in Margery a beauty of character that was not marred by any apparent effort to please, but that endowed the child with a natural ability to call out the best of everybody with whom she came into contact.

"Do you think my grandfather will be quite well again, Mr. Gordon?" Margery asked Gerald, as they sat at the luncheon table. The child's dignity was wholly unassumed and therefore the more charming.

"Why don't you call me Gerry?" he asked her, before attempting to answer her question.

She flushed a little.

"I should like to call you Gerry," she replied simply.

There was a general smile, and Gerry, to hide her slight confusion, went on,

"It's a bargain, then. As for your grandfather, I understand that the doctor thinks he has a splendid chance not only to get better, but to get well. It may take some time, and he must have rest—absolute rest—and no worry."

"Then it's very lucky that I found him just when I did, isn't it, Gerry?" Margery asked with a happy little smile. "I can take care of him."

"It seems very wonderful, the way things have worked out," Mrs. Grant put in. "We cannot be too thankful for the kind Providence that watched over Margery. I have been thinking ever since we came upon you, Margery, how dreadful was the risk you took when you came away from the Home. All kinds of terrible things might have happened to you."

"Oh, no," Margery spoke with conviction. "Back in the Home I used to pray every night—after Gerry came—that I might find my grandfather, and that I might also see Mr. Gordon again soon. I knew that it would all come out right—most things do. When I was a little girl there was the picture in the locket—it seemed to

comfort me when Mrs. Meeghan was cross and I was very lonely; and then when Gerry came I knew that somewhere in the world I had somebody who belonged to me; and now I have these kind friends and Gerry and Grandfather himself."

Gerry looked at the child wonderingly.

"When I didn't come back to the Home, did you think that I had forgotten you?" he asked.

"No," Margery answered. "But I thought that maybe you had found out that you were mistaken, and that made me feel very badly. Sometimes I was sure that you must be right, and then I would begin to be afraid that you mightn't be right, and then they took Willie away, and you didn't come, and Mrs. Meeghan scolded me all day long, so I just thought that perhaps if I could get to Mrs. Grant she would let me help take care of Willie and then I wouldn't be quite so bad."

"You poor little girl," Gerry said sympathisingly. "We all owe her a lot of petting to make up for the hard time she's had," he continued to Mrs. Grant.

"Indeed we do," that lady echoed heartily, and began to suspect that in the spoiling of Margery Mr. Gerald Gordon would play a supreme part.

CHAPTER XII

GERRY HAS AN INSPIRATION

THE days at "GREEN KNOLL" passed by with little in the way of excitement or unusual event. Richard Craven won his way back to life gradually; he remained very weak, and just a trifle confused as to the turn things had taken. He still called Margery Jean, but no one bothered to correct him—it made him content to have the little girl sit with him for a while each day—but the doctor, after examining Margery, reached the conclusion that the child needed as much fresh air as possible and the companionship of children.

Therefore, Mrs. Grant let Margery have Willie for long walks on the estate; each day they would be taken for a pleasant drive in the car, and once a week Gerald Gordon would get away from his office in town, where he was once more back at work, and run out to "GREEN KNOLL" in his machine. Those weekly visits were the high water-marks of happiness in Margery's life. From Thursday on she would live for them; for hours before it was time for him to arrive she would

be dressed in her prettiest white dress—Mrs. Grant was fast supplying her with the accessories to a complete and suitable wardrobe—and would be wandering down by the gate or along the road outside the gate, listening for the toot of his horn, which she knew would sound as he glided down the hill and then up over the next hill, which would bring him to the entrance way.

Gerry treated her like a little girl, but a good comrade also. He brought her candy and books —little girl books—and now and again something more in the way of a present. But though Margery loved the candy and read the books, so that she could tell him everything in them presently, it was not what Gerry brought but Gerry himself for whom she waited so longingly. Even Willie was forgotten when Gerry came, and Margery was quite ready for a spin in the runabout, or a visit to the country club, with sometimes a trip back to town to have a wonderful dinner just alone with Gerry.

Mrs. Grant did not discourage these trips. Both she and Gerry realised, and there seemed to be a kind of tacit understanding between them, that Margery needed the training that this sort of thing would give her. An Orphanage is scarcely the training school for a girl who may have to mingle with all kinds of people, and Gerry felt that it would be just as well for Margery to come into contact at once with her own sort of people,

and so attain that poise and bearing which should have been hers by all natural heritage. When Craven recovered, he might do with his granddaughter as he pleased—he probably would—but until that time she should have the benefit of every advantage that Gerry could give her.

Gerry did not advise any educational performances for the present, because it was summer, and the doctor had said that Margery needed building up, and so the young man was careful always to have her home at a stipulated hour; she must have her regular sleep, and she must also receive the most proper kind of nourishment. Gerry laughed to himself a good many times during these days, when he thought of the part he was playing in Margery's upbringing. Had he been her father he could not have been more careful of her, or more determined that she should have the benefit of every advantage that money and thought could give her. He even permitted himself to be bored by numerous visits to picture galleries on days that were warm, because he found that Margery loved pictures, and that she could spend many happy hours among them.

In these days Margery learned to play tennis; she learned to swim; she also learned how to be her sweet, natural self at an afternoon tea without betraying at all the fact that she had not been accustomed to living all her life with the type of people who frequented these functions. Most im-

portant of all, she learned to forget the Orphan Asylum existence to which she had been bound for the first fourteen years of her life, and if Gerry was criticised for trotting this chit of a girl around everywhere he went, he had complete consolation in the fact that out of the experiences to which he was introducing Margery the child was gaining a new point of view, a self-poise that was decidedly becoming to her, and a sense of being in an atmosphere where she belonged by every tradition of birth and family.

And then, suddenly, Gerry had a wonderful inspiration. He came tearing up the hill one day on high gear and drove through the "Green Knoll" gate with a flourish. Margery, her curls tied up in a great blue bow, her slender feet clad in white shoes and her white dress immaculate as the snow, came running down the drive to meet him. With a spring she was up on the running-board, and laughing together, they drew up in front of the house before either had a chance to say more than a word of greeting. Then Gerry commanded,

"Get your hat; we're going somewhere; I've a secret."

Margery laughed gaily.

"Just a second," she sang, and was off into the house. In a minute she was back with a sweater and cap, and had climbed in beside him.

"Where are we going, Gerry?" she demanded.

"Wait," he whispered impressively.

So Margery sat still and waited, and in a few minutes she began to guess.

Since the night Mrs. Grant had found Margery and Craven beside the ruins of the cottage, Margery had never been back to her grandfather's little home. Once or twice she had wanted to go, but no one had given her any encouragement, and though she and Gerry had passed it a hundred times, no reference had been made to it. Somehow, everybody had felt that in the ruins of the cottage lay the secret of a tragedy, and one and all they had evaded the issues that any investigation might give rise to. That the ruin was complete seemed to do away with any question of seeking for articles to rescue, and the disposition that Craven might wish to make had seemed to wait of necessity on Craven.

But Gerry had been thinking about the cottage a good deal, and all at once the thought came to him that perhaps there was something after all that he and Margery might do to make Craven's recovery to health less filled with the thought of his deep loss in the little home on the edge of the woods.

"Have you guessed where we're going?" Gerry asked Margery.

"To the cottage?" Margery whispered, almost breathlessly. Gerry turned to look at her more closely. What he saw in the little girl's face re-

vealed to him something of what she had suffered in her thoughts of the cottage and its destruction. Gerry was ready to reproach himself to the utmost that he had not brought her here before.

They got out of the machine and went in through the gate. The stillness of summer lay over the little garden; a snatch of song from a bird in the woods was the only sound. For a moment or two they stood silent, as they might have stood beside the grave of some loved one. Then Gerry spoke his thought.

"Margery, I wonder what Uncle Dick would think if we rebuilt the cottage?"

"Oh, Gerry, could we?" Margery was still in the state of not realising that one could do many seemingly impossible things with the aid of material resources. Her early training would always have the effect of making her somewhat oblivious to the claims of money. But Gerry did not smile at her ingenuousness.

"We could," he said instead. "I've already drawn up the plans, and if you say the word, I'll have the workmen out here next week to clear away all this"—he pointed to the charred fragments—"and to begin building at once."

"And the moment grandfather is well enough to come out, we'll bring him straight to the cottage!" Margery's voice was full of ecstasy.

"And you think he'll be glad?" Gerry questioned. Gerry had memories of Richard Craven

which could not possibly disturb Margery's confidence in her grandfather, but which in himself gave rise to numerous doubts.

"Why, of course he'll be glad," Margery did not refrain from putting a touch of criticism into her voice. What was the matter with Gerry? "It will be just as if the cottage had never burned down!"

Gerry was silent. He could not trust himself to offer any disillusionments to the child.

"All right," he declared. "We'll go ahead with it. I'll show you the plans when we get home. But of course it must be a secret from your grandfather."

"Oh, yes, indeed. Oh, Gerry, I can't help thinking how surprised and glad he will be. You're just like a fairy prince, Gerry; you are able to do everything to make people happy and give them what they want."

Gerry looked down into the glowing face. Something in him stirred to a new thought of Margery. She was a child, but already the first fine tendrils of her woman's devotion were winding themselves around his heart. A week ago he would have stooped and kissed her—now he would not. He shook himself free of the spell of enchantment that momentarily bound him. Margery was a baby; he was doing for her what he would have done had she been his own child. So he deceived himself, because he dared not do

otherwise. But suddenly it dawned on him that bringing up Margery might have its complications.

They drove home almost in silence. Margery was filled with the wonder of being able to give this great surprise to her grandfather; Gerry was absorbed in the thoughts that had taken hold of him in spite of himself. He was really relieved when they got out in front of the Grant house and were able to go into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Grant was already serving tea.

CHAPTER XIII

THE NEW CRAVEN

RICHARD CRAVEN lay in the long chair in a shaded corner of the verandah at "GREEN KNOLL," and watched Margery and Willie playing with blocks on the floor nearby.

Craven looked old and he felt old. Slowly he was returning to life, but as yet he could do little toward that return himself. The past seemed one long, endless dream, and too much of it was like nightmare. He wanted to get away from it. Yet his hold on the present was still very weak, and he had not the courage to look to the future. So far he had been content to know that he was in good and capable hands, and little by little the realisation had come to him that he had a granddaughter, and that by some strange twist of Fate Gerry Gordon was present much of the time to give him the prop he needed.

In the years that had passed Craven had thought often enough of Gerry. If there were things to be explained, they were not troubling him in his present condition. There were moments when he believed that he must have died,

and that this was a new world entirely—had he had his choice, he would have liked to go on in that belief.

But with the increase in physical strength memories had begun to return, and as he sat there watching the children, some of those memories became more vivid. He knew that the day was coming, and coming soon, when he must face certain facts and problems and assume certain responsibilities. He knew that he had failed Jean; he must not fail Margery. And his heart warmed to the thought, as he watched the golden head bent over the bridge of blocks that Margery builded for Willie, and heard the sweet, thin voice explaining with a charming quaintness, and no little originality, the task that was being done.

"Margery," Craven's voice was weak and hoarse, and when it spoke that name it trembled.

Margery was on her feet in an instant, and standing by his chair.

"Did you want anything, Grandfather?" she asked.

Craven smiled.

"No, dear," he answered. "Nothing but to make sure that you were real."

"You feel much better, Grandfather?" Margery was examining his face anxiously.

"Much better," he declared. "So much better that I have been wondering if we might not go away, you and I together?"

"Are you tired of 'Green Knoll'?" Margery asked in frank surprise.

"No, not tired of 'Green Knoll.' But I wonder if we had not better go. The doctor thinks I should have a few weeks at the seashore."

"I should like the seashore," Margery commented. "And if it would make you strong again we ought surely to go."

"You would miss Willie?" Craven persisted.

"Yes, of course. But then Willie has his mother and you have only me, you know." Margery looked up with a wonderful love in her blue eyes.

"Come here," Craven whispered huskily. "Child, child, I don't know how I ever thought I lived when I didn't have you." He held her close to him and kissed her soft cheek again and again. If there was yet hardness in Richard Craven, at least this child should never be the victim of it.

So it was presently decided that Craven and Margery should go to Atlantic City.

"Why not some quieter place?" Gerry wanted to know. But the doctor was clear in his reasons. He wanted Craven to see people and come into contact with them. He wanted to get him back to normal, healthy ways of living.

"He's lived with memories too long as it is. He won't need memories now—he has Margery." And that settled it.

Both Margery and Gerry were afraid that

Craven might mention the cottage. The place was already well on in the building, but it would spoil it all to have to show it to Craven before it was done. Therefore, the most elaborate plans were made for getting him away without having to go near the cottage, and fortunately for everybody, Craven said nothing that indicated that he even remembered that there had been a cottage.

One thing Gerry did find a chance to do before they left "GREEN KNOLL." He had been impatient from the beginning to clear up the matter of Craven's will, whereby he was beneficiary. Gerry had never touched a penny of Craven's money in the years that had gone by, and now he was anxious that the unjust will which had disinherited Jean should no longer exist. He spoke to the doctor and received permission to talk with Craven.

"Uncle Dick, there's something I must speak to you about," he said, once more the boyish, embarrassed Gerry of years ago.

"Yes?" Craven was not desirous of going into the past, and yet he dared not refuse Gerry's request.

"I have here," Gerry went on, "the will you left with my father. I want you to destroy it and let me bring a lawyer so that you may make a new will."

"Why should I destroy the will?" Craven inquired, a touch of petulancy creeping into his

voice. "It was a perfectly good will—I wonder that you have not availed yourself of its bequests."

Gerry forgave the tone and the implication. For Margery's sake he must coax if he could not drive.

"I never needed any of that money, Uncle Dick. Father left me a nice, comfortable fortune, and I have earned a good living for myself. I want Margery to have the money, Uncle Dick—I want her to have 'TIMBERVALE.'" He choked a little over the last.

"'TIMBERVALE,'" Craven repeated the name; "I don't think I want ever to see 'TIMBERVALE' again; I don't know that I want Margery to see it."

"Not now, perhaps, but might not the day come when Margery ought to see 'TIMBERVALE'?"

"My boy, you shall have your own way. I'm an old man, older than I should be for my years. You are young, with life still ahead of you. You are right and I am wrong; I won't try to disguise the fact even to myself. Destroy the old will and have one drawn up that I may sign it, leaving all that I possess to Margery. Name yourself the executor—that much at least you can do for me. It seems strange, but money has accumulated like a great burden upon me. I don't know myself how much there must be of it. And yet it has never bought for me or kept for me any of the

things I have most wanted." His voice trailed off in a sigh.

"But it will give much to Margery," Gerry answered softly. "And you will have Margery to make up for some of the things you have wanted and have not gotten."

"Yes, I have Margery. I am almost persuaded that there is a God when I look at Margery." It was a flash of the old Craven, and Gerry welcomed it.

"Margery might make any man—or woman either—believe in God," he responded.

"Gerry," Craven's voice faltered again. "Did you ever find out about Jean?"

It was the question Gerry dreaded. But he forced himself to answer calmly, so calmly that his reply sounded almost indifferent.

"Jean died, Uncle Dick. I can't find out what became of Heath. But she died suddenly—she did not suffer any long illness. I found out that much. I saw her after Margery was born; the child gave her happiness."

Craven was silent. Words seemed so useless to express what he felt.

"Gerry," he said at last. "If ever you have a daughter, don't be hard on her. We pay a terrible price for hardness and selfishness."

Gerry nodded. "Uncle Dick," he began again, "there's somebody who wants to see you very badly."

Craven started. "Who?" he asked.

"Thomas, your old valet. I've kept him in our old house. He totters around and dreams of the day when he may serve you again. I took Margery to see him and the old man cried over her. He said she was just like her grandmother, whom he seems to have loved dearly."

"Old Thomas, the good, old fellow. He has served me faithfully. Gerry, he shall go with us to the shore. Is he physically able?"

"Yes, indeed. His hair is white and he is a little bent with rheumatism, but I think he'll take a new lease on life if he can be with you."

"Tell him I'm a broken man, Gerry."

"No, Uncle Dick, I won't. You are not a broken man. Once you are strong again you'll forget all about this brokenness and be writing books once more and keeping us all on the move, I suspect."

"You're a great comfort, Gerry. A few more in the world like you would make this old sphere a different place. Now run along and get the new will and send word to Thomas, and I'll take a little rest again."

So Gerry lighted the old will with a match and let it burn in the fireplace. Craven pretended to pay no heed, but if any one could have read his mind, it would have been to see revealed a great contentment that at last the act of injustice of which he was so thoroughly ashamed was to be righted.

CHAPTER XIV

PLANS FOR LITTLE GIRL MARGERY

MARGERY stood at the window of one of their rooms in the big ocean-front hotel and held her breath, as she watched the sea come rolling in on great breakers that roared and scattered and splashed their creamy foam in wide circles over the water.

Craven, from his couch, watched her.

"And what do you think of the sea, little girl?" he inquired presently.

Margery turned to him, her blue eyes dark and shining.

"Oh, Grandfather, it's wonderful, too wonderful!"

"Some day," Craven told her, "you and I will take a boat and go over the ocean. You would like to do that, Margery?"

"It would be lovely, Grandfather. Mrs. Grant has told me a lot about the cities she knows over there—London and Paris and Rome. I want to go to Rome, especially, Grandfather."

Craven smiled. "To Rome then we shall go," he promised.

That very day Margery had her first experience at sea-bathing. For Gerry had come to the shore with them—not to stay, he said, but just for a week-end—and Gerry was like a boy when he found Margery in ecstasies over the sea and the people and the beautiful hotel. She took to the water like a veritable water-baby, so that it was nothing for her to put her small swimming knowledge to practice, and Craven began to fret as the time went by and the two did not return to him. Something of the old imperiousness was coming back with his return to strength, and now he was beginning to want Margery to himself more and more.

And indeed, as the days went by, Margery grew closer and closer to him. Gerry was presently called away on a business trip, and the grandfather and granddaughter were left to themselves. They passed long hours on the boardwalk, where Craven's chair became a familiar object, and not a few people in passing remarked the fine-looking, grey-haired invalid and the charming, fresh-faced young girl.

Margery was, however, growing up these days. She was still a child in many ways, it is true, but the first touches of womanhood were beginning to be apparent in her. And much as Craven longed to absorb her time and attention, he could not blind himself to the facts of the situation—the child must have a woman's companionship, or she

must go to school, for he would not run the risk of doing to her what he had done to Jean by keeping her away from the company of her own sex and age.

With each week of the summer Craven found himself stronger—found himself more and more ready to take hold of life once more, and battle with its problems. And the difference between the old Craven and the new was that he discovered in himself a willingness to face problems—he thought less of Craven and more of other people. One day he said to Margery:

"The summer is going soon, Margery. We must make some plans for the fall."

Margery's heart beat hard. Gerry was expected home that very week, and she knew that he would bring her news of the cottage. If only Grandfather would wait to talk about it until she knew just where matters stood. But Craven could not know that she did not want the cottage mentioned. So he went on,

"You remember, little girl, how you and I went to the cottage on the edge of the woods, and found it gone?"

"Yes, Grandfather."

"Well, that little cottage was the home I had builded for myself. When your mother married in disobedience to my wishes," he tried to speak calmly, but a tremor came into his voice, "I hated the world, or thought I did. So I ran away

like a coward from the home where Jean and I had lived—some day I will tell you all about that part of it—and then I found the bit of woods where the cottage stood, and good old Roderick and I started in to make our home there."

"And you wrote more books there, Grandfather?" Margery asked. Gerry had told her much of the story.

They were silent—Margery could not reproach, and yet in her heart was a little wish that Grandfather had never been unkind to the girl of the picture. Margery could not help wondering how he ever could have been so.

Then Craven continued:

"I want to go back to the cottage, Margery. I want to have it built up again and go there and live. If I took my own way, I should take you and the dog and Thomas and go and live there on the edge of the woods, but I have thought the matter over and I see other things that must be done."

"I should love the little cottage, Grandfather," Margery put in softly.

Craven shook his head a trifle impatiently. He dared not show how deeply the words and the tone touched him, for he was doing the hardest thing he had done in his life, and only the determination that possessed him made it possible for him to carry his proposed line of action through.

"Margery, you are almost fifteen years old."

"Yes, Grandfather."

"And little girls have many things to learn before they are ready to battle with the world."

Margery waited, wondering a little at what was coming.

"I have made up my mind, sweetheart, that you must go to school."

"And leave you, Grandfather?" Margery wished the moment she had said it that she could take the words back. For Craven went a little white, and his voice quivered when he answered.

"If I had sent Jean to school," he said, almost as if to himself, "things might have been different. I will not risk it." Then he recalled himself and spoke again to Margery.

"I am an old man, little girl, and I am paying for the mistakes I made when I was young enough to know better. I want you to have your chance to live, child; you must have it. Dearly as I should love to have you with me all the time, I realise that the companionship of a middle-aged, spoiled and selfish man is not the right companionship for a young girl. You must know other girls; you must have women's guidance. Yes, you must go to school."

"Will it be for very long, Grandfather?" Margery could not help asking.

"We will try a couple of terms; I happen to know of a good school in Philadelphia, and I think that we shall try that. And when you have a va-

cation you will come back to visit your old grandfather in the new cottage."

Margery laughed a little hysterically. It was getting hard to keep her secret, and Craven looked at her seriously.

But the end of the week brought Gerry.

"The cottage is almost done," he whispered to Margery at the first opportunity, and Margery laughed happily. There was no chance to tell Gerry of what her grandfather had said.

Craven himself broached the subject, however, and then Gerry, with a perfectly grave face, suggested that if Craven felt equal to the trip to New York they would motor out to look over the ground and perhaps he could make plans for a new cottage.

So Craven, now able to walk without even the help of a cane, ordered a car, and in the late days of summer they drove back to the city, to stay temporarily in a hotel until Margery's school preparations should be completed. Craven intended to have the work of the house hurried, with the hope that he might occupy it before or by Christmas.

CHAPTER XV

GERRY AND MARGERY GIVE CRAVEN A SURPRISE

MARGERY was all aquiver with happy expectation as they drove out to the cottage. Gerry found a chance to tell her about it, and she was sure that her grandfather would be most wonderfully surprised. She wished that they had had time to furnish it, but then, as Gerry said, perhaps her grandfather would prefer to choose his own furnishings. At all events, Gerry had aimed to make it as nearly like the old house as he could without ever having seen the cottage that was burned. He alone knew how much time he had spent getting folks in the neighbourhood to describe to him the cottage as it had been.

At last the moment for the great surprise arrived. Almost before they knew it, they were at the gate of the garden, and Gerry helped Margery and Craven out of the car. And then Craven saw the house, and stood dumbfounded.

There it was, to the clematis vine and the yellow shades at the windows. Gerry had made sure of the colour of the shades. Only in its fresh paint did it seem any different from the house

that Craven had locked up and left when he and the dog took to the road, while Raymond Heath slept under the bushes.

Craven turned to Margery and then to Gerry.

"Am I dreaming?" he asked dazedly.

It was Margery who did the explaining. She led him by the hand to the little porch and made him sit down on the step. And then she told him what she and Gerry had planned, and how Gerry had carried out the plans.

"But we haven't put in any furniture," she finished. "We left that for you. And you do like it, Grandfather?" she pleaded, as Craven continued to say nothing.

Whereupon he put his arms around her and held her, as he had held her in the woods on the day of their first meeting.

"My little Margery," he whispered, "you did this for me. And Gerry—" he held out his hand, which Gerry, a litfle abashed, took. "It's very wonderful," he went on. "The only thing in the world I wanted, after I found Margery. My little home, it's fine, it's wonderful, and you are two very dear children for an old man to have."

A new vigour possessed him as he got up and went inside the cottage, for Gerry was now opening the door and standing aside to let him enter. Yes, there was the study, not quite the same, but with the same outlook, and there was the small kitchen and the round, bayed dining-room.

"How did you do it, Gerry?" Craven had to ask.

Gerry laughed.

"Some of my information about the place came from the neighbours, and some of it was guesswork. A little help came from the cottage itself when they cleared it away."

Craven's face shadowed.

"They found nothing that could be saved?" he asked.

"Nothing. There were burned papers and a few sticks of furniture and some tin cans, but nothing that was not damaged beyond repair. Uncle Dick, did you ever wonder how the cottage came to burn?"

Craven laughed shortly. "I wondered, yes. It seemed like the hand of Fate," he ended, in a more softened tone.

"It may have been the hand of Fate that directed the job," Gerald returned promptly, "but it was the hand of man that did the trick. Uncle Dick, the cottage was set afire and oil was used to make the blaze."

Craven faced him quickly. "Who told you that?" he demanded, and there was a touch of anger in his voice.

"A farmer down the road. He was here before the fire was over. He declared that he found signs of the oil that had been used, and the fire burned very rapidly."

"But why should any one want to burn the cottage?" Margery put in.

Craven looked at her queerly. A thought the more startling because it seemed so preposterous, had flashed across his brain. But he had enough control not to voice it.

"Some tramp must have done it," he said finally, and closed the subject by starting to make plans for furnishing the new cottage.

CHAPTER XVI

LOVE TAKES A HAND IN THE GAME

MARGERY had never spoken to any one save Gerry of her father. Of him she had asked the question concerning his death. Gerry had told her what he could without giving her too bad an impression. And it was but natural that, having so little that was tangible to go upon, Margery failed to entertain any very real feeling of affection for, or desire to know more about, this father whose personality was wrapped in shadows.

In October of the year in which she found her grandfather, Margery went to the Philadelphia school. She proved herself a diligent pupil, and a favourite among the girls of her own age. If she was sometimes puzzled over the many questions that could not help but come up about her birth and family, at least she was so simple in her manner, so frank in her way of expressing her thoughts, that she was found entirely lovable, and even in a school where there was a certain proportion of snobbery she was able to pass the tests

of the most critical. For with Margery courtesy was innate, and sincerity second nature.

At Christmas time she went to visit Craven in the cottage and there found him hard at work on a book. He put his notebook aside, however, the day she entered the house, and gave himself up to the complete luxury of having her with him. For hours he would listen to her girlish prattle about the school and the people in it, and then she in turn would listen while he tried to tell her all that he could about himself, her mother, Gerry when he was a boy with Jean, and the dear friend, John Gordon, whom Craven mourned in a very sincere spirit.

That was a week of quiet joy and the deepening of a true understanding between the man and the young girl. Craven did not spare himself, but he found Margery ever trying to exonerate him. In the light of his every action toward her the child could reach but one conclusion, and that was that he exaggerated his own faults and magnified what he considered his failures.

In the little house old Thomas moved about with a face that beamed. These were halcyon days for Thomas, with the master he loved, and a master who now could not seem to be considerate enough in his ways. Indeed, old Thomas's only complaint was that his master was too kind. "He don't seem quite natural," he confided to Gerry, but Gerry laughed. "Wait, he may break

out yet," which did not speak well for Gerry's faith in the continuance of Craven's good behaviour.

Gerry spent Christmas Day with them. He said that it was his first real Christmas for many years, as indeed it was Margery's first real Christmas. And it was in connection with this that Margery asked her grandfather for something that she wanted very badly.

"I want to send presents to the children in Harmony Home," she had written. And Craven had replied, "Send all that you want." So it was that the Harmony Home children had gifts that year such as they had never had before. But though Craven sent Mrs. Meeghan a big check and a beautiful letter, he would not go near the Home himself, nor would he let Margery make a visit there. On that one point he was obdurate—his granddaughter must not return to those early surroundings; and Margery, of whom he had never exacted obedience in any other particular, gave him his way.

However, she enlisted Gerry's interest in the children of the Home, and through him she contrived to make a way for helping more than one child to a better prospect for the future.

The two years that Margery spent in school made a great difference in her appearance and no small difference in her general attitude toward things and people. Simple and true-hearted

though she might always be, Margery began to give events and circumstances more of their true values. And the woman in her was not without those dreams that come to a girl in the first bloom of womanhood. Books again opened up a new world for her, and all the innate sense for romance that had exhibited itself back in the days when she told fairy-tales by the yard in the Harmany Home, grew and thrived in her. The new secret that she cherished within her was the inseparable image of Gerry, the embodiment of her dreams, the personification of the ideal lover for whom all unconsciously, but girl-like, she longed.

Margery scarcely realised herself in those days just what Gerry meant to her, but she did vaguely understand that in her heart she could never associate love with any one save Gerry. Instinctively she measured every boy and man she met by Gerry. She spent the days between Gerry's visit to the school waiting for him to come again, even as she had waited in those first days when he had come for her so often to "Green Knoll." All her devotion to her grandfather could not match the feeling that she had of belonging to Gerry, and she had yet to know the day when she could meet him without a beating heart and a blushing face.

It was at the end of her second year that Craven decided to go abroad. Gerry bade them good-bye at the pier, and felt something around

his heart tighten in a mysterious way when he saw Margery's face, her eyes swimming with tears. Gerry knew now and had known for some time that Margery could not grow to womanhood and not mean more to him than any other woman in life. His boyhood love for Jean was a faded memory as compared with this white flame which seemed to set his very soul on fire when he looked into the girl's blue eyes. And yet Gerry was very doubtful. What would Craven do if he confessed that he loved Margery? Dared he find the child for her grandfather only to suggest taking her away? And she was so young, with so little knowledge of the world of men. Would it be fair to persuade her that the affection which he knew she had for him was the one love that the years would give to her? Could he, a man more than twice her age, open up for her that wonderland of beauty which for a girl of her temperament love and marriage must bring? They were chums —dared he risk the loss of that sweet companionship which had given such happy days and would go on giving if he did not spoil it, by frightening her with thoughts of marriage?

Gerry spent long hours working the problem out, without reaching any definite conclusion. Then he got the White Star Line on the 'phone and engaged a stateroom. But the next day he cancelled the reservation and took a train for the West. He had some California interests and he

would go and look after them. He was afraid of himself and afraid for Margery. She must have her chance to know other men better before he would seek the advantage of wooing her.

In Europe Margery was to all intents and purposes a happy girl. She was eager and enthusiastic and glowing. But she wanted Gerry. She never told Craven about it, but her grandfather noticed that she was now and again unexpectedly thoughtful.

"Homesick?" he teased her.

"Not exactly," she replied a little uncertainly. "It's all so wonderful, Grandfather. I don't know how to thank you."

Whereat Craven would stroke her hair and wonder if she understood at all how little of the obligation was on her side?

CHAPTER XVII

—AND MARGERY HELPS

GERRY was not there to meet them when they landed in New York. Margery was obviously disappointed. But at the hotel they found a telegram, saying that he was unavoidably detained in Los Angeles, and would not be home again for some weeks. Margery went quietly to her room and cried. It was mean of Gerry not to be in New York when they came. He should have known that they wanted him to be with them. He had spoiled her homecoming, for she had so much to tell him and it needed telling quick. That evening she sat down and wrote,

"*Dearest Gerry,*

I am very much put out with you. Grandfather and I had it all decided that you would be at the boat to meet us, and there on the dock, where everybody was happily meeting everybody else, we were all alone and no sign of even the one friend for whom we were looking. Grandfather is so adverse to having anybody know who he is, that he keeps out of crowds as much as pos-

sible, and so we slipped away very quietly and came here to the hotel.

Won't you please try to come East as soon as possible? I have such a wonderful lot to tell you about. It doesn't feel as if it would keep very long.

Grandfather is very well, and is talking about going down to the cottage. I accused him of wanting to get to work on his book, and he only laughed. I'm afraid he's still restless. We met some lovely people in Europe and I think that Grandfather must be a great man. But he never seems quite happy, and I think he is longing for the quiet little study and the dog. We had word from Thomas that everything was ready for us to come home, and so I suppose we shall go.

Please write me a letter or I shall think that you are not happy about something.

Affectionately,

MARGERY."

Gerry read the letter and groaned.

"She thinks I'm not happy. Good God, not happy isn't the word for it."

Whereupon he wrote back,

"*Dear little girl Margery,*

I am sorry, now that I have your letter, that I didn't take the first train home when I heard you were coming. I didn't think that it would make

much difference if I weren't there. The truth is that my heart was there. You must be a big girl since you have been to Europe and have met so many people. I almost wish that you hadn't grown up, little Margery, for then we could have gone on being chums and having our old happy times. But now you will be having beaux and will soon forget your old friend Gerry.

Give Uncle Dick my love and tell him that I am coming home soon.

Your loving friend,

GERRY."

Margery showed the letter to Craven. Craven frowned. He understood if Margery didn't. He had felt that this problem was bound to come as he watched the growth of Gerry's devotion. What he could not be sure of was Margery's own feelings. She was such a child—it seemed wrong to put ideas of love and marriage into her head. And yet Craven had spent more than one night in restless worry over the girl's future. To save her from a mistake such as her mother had made—for that he was almost willing that Gerry should kidnap her and marry her forthwith. Yet he knew that if Gerry did marry her he would owe Gerry a grudge—he wanted her for himself, this little granddaughter who had brought the first sunshine into his life since the death of his own wife Jean.

"What is the matter with Gerry, Grandfather?" Margery wanted to know.

"Little girl, come here." Craven put his arm around her. She was very small for her age; at eighteen she looked a mere child. Her blue eyes had the clear lights of childhood and her hair, a mass of curls, was merely pinned over her head and hung in snug little ringlets. Margery was beautiful, as her mother never had been. And she had a childlike air that made one want to protect her.

"Did it ever occur to you, little Granddaughter, that Gerry is a man and that you are now a woman?" Craven threaded his way very carefully.

"Why, of course, he's a man and I'm a woman, Grandfather. What do you mean?" Margery laughed merrily.

"Little girl, you have no mother to tell you many of the things you should know. But your own mother had no mother either. And she made a great mistake. She thought she was in love with a young good-for-nothing, and when I tried to keep her from marrying him, because I was afraid that she would not be happy, she was very angry. She ran away with him, and we do not know what afterwards became of him. She must have been very poor or you would not have had to go to a Home after she died. Margery, I would kill myself this minute rather than have you make

a similar mistake; I believe that I would almost be ready to kill you if I thought you were likely to make such a mistake." Then, as he saw how wide the girl's eyes were, with a glint of fright, he went on more gently.

"Do not be frightened, sweetheart. I am telling you this in order that such a thing may not happen. Gerry loved your mother, Margery."

"Oh, Grandfather! And wouldn't Mother Jean marry Gerry?"

Craven found the answer to the question in his heart in Margery's query. The note of surprise, the note of hurt that any one ever could reject Gerry, almost made Craven smile. He continued,

"Dear, she didn't love Gerry. She thought she loved Raymond Heath."

"And was Gerry very sorry, Grandfather?" Margery asked softly.

"I don't know," Craven confessed. "I went away and never saw Gerry again until he came to 'Green Knoll.' "

"Poor Gerry. And he never tried to marry any one else, do you think, Grandfather?" Margery's voice was a little eager.

"I don't think so. But I am not so worried about Gerry, dear; it is you of whom I have been thinking. You are eighteen, and soon the young men and perhaps other older men will begin to realise that you are a woman, and that you are

a pretty woman. There will be men, dear, who will want to marry you. Oh, my dear, if I could only be sure that the right man would find you—I am old, Margery, and I feel older as the months go by. I will not always be here to look after you. Suppose some man should come as he came to your mother, and win your heart away from me, and then it should turn out that he was not the right man, after all?"

"But, Grandfather, there is Gerry." Margery spoke in frank innocence. "If my mother made Gerry suffer, so that he has never been able to have a wife, then I must try to make up to Gerry for what my mother did. I don't think I want to marry any man, Grandfather, unless it could be Gerry."

Her tone was so earnest that Craven, startled though he was by the point of view presented, could scarcely help smiling.

"But, you know," he said, "Gerry hasn't asked you to marry him. And we do not know that he would want to ask you."

Margery considered. Then she smiled, with a happy thought.

"We won't worry about it, Grandfather. There will be just you and Gerry always, you know. And if Gerry doesn't want to marry me, I'll not bother marrying anybody, and we can go on being chums the same as ever. I'll tell him when I write that I'll never be too grown up to be his

chum. And now it's time for your nap, and I'll rub your precious eyes asleep."

"You're a wonderful sweet comfort, Margery, my own," sighed Craven, and closed his eyes.

But Margery dreamed the dream of a woman waking to the first knowledge of love. For she knew now that she loved Gerry with her whole heart and soul.

CHAPTER XVIII

AN INGENUOUS PROPOSAL

TO say that Gerry was startled when he received Margery's letter would be stating the case mildly. She wrote to him,

"*Dear Chum,*

I'm not very much grown up and I don't want to stop being chums. Grandfather is afraid that I shall fall in love with some mysterious personage known as a man, and I have told him that I shall never fall in love with any one but you. It isn't proper for a girl to ask a man to marry her, but what is the girl going to do when she thinks that the man would like to marry her, but that for some reason or other he's afraid to say so? I truly believe that you think you are too old for me.

However, I assured Grandfather that I was quite willing to be an old maid and just look after him and you, and so I am. Only, don't stay away so long—we miss you.

Your little friend,

MARGERY."

Gerry had to laugh over the letter, and it was a big, happy laugh. No girl but Margery could have written it, Margery with her entire absence of self-consciousness, her absolute lack of a knowledge of the realities of life; her instinct for unselfishness, and her abounding loyalty to those whom she held most dear. Well, the problem was still a problem—Margery had not made the situation much different. To her marriage was a bit of play—like children playing at keeping house. But Gerry began to feel dimly that perhaps Margery might be awakened some day to a rather different conception of things, and he began to argue with himself that it would be better for him to undertake the awakening than to leave it to some one else. Even Craven would have to admit the logic of that stand.

Gerry had no doubt of his own capacity for self-sacrifice where Margery was concerned. Were it for her happiness he would willingly give up even life itself.

So he suddenly packed his things, cleaned up his business and set out for New York.

CHAPTER XIX

AS FOR HEATH—

A STILL young-looking, though grey-haired man sat in the lobby of a New York hotel and glanced through the evening papers. A brief announcement held his attention. It said that Richard Craven and his granddaughter Margery Heath had just returned from abroad and were stopping in New York for a week or so prior to returning to Craven's home at ———.

So Craven had Jean's daughter.

Heath had never thought of Margery as his own daughter. She had always been Jean's daughter. All that horrible past seemed no longer to belong to him; he hated to think of it; he had spent the years in running away from it. But now and again the name of Craven in the newspapers would meet his eye like some ghost risen to haunt him, and now it was no longer Craven alone—it was Craven's granddaughter.

Heath was low in funds these days. Unstable of character as ever, only the latent desire for respectability had kept him to the straight road. But he had had ups and downs. At one moment successful, he was in the next down and out again;

and so since the night when he had set Craven's cottage on fire, he had passed himself off as a prosperous business man, hiding away in the hours when the want of money had driven him to go hungry, or the temptation to seek at the hands of the man he had so hated some definite financial aid had proved almost too strong. But he had feared to approach Craven—until now. The newspaper notice gave him his cue. Craven had Jean's daughter—she was his daughter too. Though in reality he would never dare to claim her, he could at least give Craven some uncomfortable moments by presenting himself alive and active to him. To get rid of him he did not doubt but that Craven would pay.

When Craven was told that a man of the name of Heath wanted to see him, he was, fortunately, alone. He told them to send the visitor up.

And then he waited, the wraiths of a thousand memories filling the room, in his heart a hate that boded no great good for the man who had dared to show himself at last.

Heath came in and closed the door. For a moment he had a slight shock as he noted the signs of age in Craven. He had always remembered him as the great, strong, domineering man who had opposed Jean's marriage. He had feared Craven—now he saw that there would be less cause for fear.

Craven spoke first.

"You have shown up at last?" His voice was strained and hoarse.

Heath answered unhesitatingly. "Yes, I saw that my daughter was here with you." Then he wished that he had spoken less quickly. Craven rose from his chair and came close to him; he towered over him, and his eyes gleamed under his shaggy brows like those of a madman. Heath could almost feel his fingers on his throat, and he shrank back.

"Your daughter! By what right do you call her yours, when you deserted the mother and left her to die, when you let the child go to an Orphans' Home, where only by chance she was found? Who are you to say that she is yours, or to lay any claim to her? You killed Jean, you took the chance of the child away—how dare you come and whine to me about 'my daughter'?"

"I didn't desert Jean—she deserted me," Heath lied.

Craven hesitated, and in that hesitation Heath found his chance. Coolly, and confidently, now that he had the other man almost weak with his anger, he said,

"And where were you, Mr. Richard Craven, when your daughter needed you most? When she had to go to John Gordon to get the money that we didn't have though there was a baby coming? She wrote to you and you didn't an-

swer; it wasn't my fault that we lost out; a little would have saved us, but you didn't give us that little. Jean was too proud to beg. She would not let even Gordon know the full extent of our troubles."

"But what about the time Jean died?" Craven demanded.

"I had gone West to get work. When I came back she was gone; there was no sign of her or the child."

"What are you doing now?"

"Newspaper work. I don't want to seem ugly, Mr. Craven, but the girl is my daughter—I didn't know but that she was dead years ago. Now that I am sure that she is alive, I want to see her; I want to know her, and I have the right."

"Heath," Craven's calm was icy, "I'd rather die than have you know your daughter or have her know you. The child knows nothing of you now, and what she will learn of you if she comes into contact with you will not be good. I'll make a bargain with you—I'll settle an annuity upon you of five thousand dollars, if you'll give me your word that you'll never try to see her so that she will know who you are. What name do you use, your own?"

"No, I'm known as John Grayson."

"Good. Take my offer and we'll cry quits."

Heath paused a moment. This was nearly what he wanted. Not quite, for in his heart he had a

curiosity to meet Margery. But that might come later.

"I'll take you up," he answered briefly.

"Here's your first check." Craven sat down and took out a check book.

"What's your address?" Heath gave him a box number.

Suddenly Craven looked up. For the instant he had Heath off his guard.

"Look here," Craven spoke in a voice that was deadly, "who burned down the cottage at Croyden?"

Heath's face turned green; in a flash he saw that he was trapped; he saw the five thousand dollars a year fading into nothingness. But the look in the other man's eyes warned him not to deny.

"I burned the cottage," he confessed. "I was mad with hunger and I hated you. I was sorry after I had done the thing."

There was a moment of tense silence, in which Heath died a thousand deaths under the gaze of Craven's angry eyes. Then Craven spoke again and once more his voice sent the shivers up and down Heath's back.

"You may thank whatever God you know that I do not kill you. But for Margery I should do it. But look here, and be warned—I am paying you for keeping the temptation to kill you from me. You shall have your money, but don't risk coming into my sight again. I am a man of my word,

and you have done me a wrong that not blood itself can repay. Take your check and go, but remember that you stand to lose all if you try to break your bargain."

And then, just as Craven handed the check to Heath, Margery came into the room. She stopped when she saw the stranger.

"Mr. Grayson—my granddaughter, Miss Heath." Craven was himself on the instant. But Heath could not rise to the occasion. He mumbled an acknowledgment of the introduction, murmured an excuse for hurrying away, and with a confused sense of a face that was oddly familiar and a voice that was so like Jean's that had he heard it in another room he would have sworn it was hers, he almost stumbled from the room.

"Who is Mr. Grayson, Grandfather?" Margery asked.

"Oh, he's just a man in on some business, sweetheart," Craven replied, in an elaborately tired voice, and then he put his arms around her and kissed her as he had kissed her but once or twice before. It caused Margery to look at him closely.

"You are very tired, Grandfather?" she asked.

"Yes, dear, and a little upset; nothing serious," he hastened to add, as he saw her about to speak. "I'll go rest for awhile."

And that was the only time that Margery ever saw her father.

CHAPTER XX

IT IS GERRY'S TURN TO PROPOSE

GERRY arrived in New York in the morning. He went at once to his own apartment, where he had a good hot tub, a cold shower and put on fresh clothes preparatory to setting out to see his little lady-love. Had he been twenty instead of thirty-nine he could not have been more light-hearted, more ready for gay adventure, more filled with eagerness to see the lights shine in a girl's eyes and hear from her own lips the sweet confession of her love for him. True, if Gerry had permitted himself to think, he might have still had some doubts. Wisdom would have counselled that Margery was hardly as yet capable of judging of her own emotions; reason would have advised waiting; but Gerry was not willing to listen any longer either to Wisdom or Reason —Margery had said that she loved him; his faith in his own great love for her was enough to make him believe that the future would take care of itself.

Wherefore Gerry called a taxi, dropped off at a Fifth Avenue jeweller's, chose an exquisite lit-

tle platinum ring set in sapphires and diamonds, and rushed down to the hotel where Craven and Margery were staying.

Craven received him with a cordial handclasp.

"It's good to see you, Gerry," he said, and Gerry answered,

"It was vile of me not to be here when you arrived." And then Margery appeared, and Margery was so glad to see Gerry that she forgot her grandfather and everything else and just rushed into his arms, with,

"Oh, Gerry, I thought you were never coming."

And Gerry, who had planned to lay siege to her heart in true lover fashion, put his arms around her and kissed her and crooned over her, as if she had been a lost baby just found again.

Craven sat aside and smiled. Then, with a little sigh, he got up and went away very softly. He might just as well have made a noise, for the other two would not have heard him.

"Margery, little girl Margery," Gerry was whispering, while Margery was crying, half-way between tears and laughter.

"Oh, Gerry, was I very dreadful to tell you I loved you?" But she didn't bother about the answer that never came, for Gerry's kisses told more than words could have done, and the strength with which he held her frightened her just a little, but it was an entirely pleasant fright —Margery was sure that with Gerry's arms

around her the world would always be a most beautiful place, and there was nothing in all of it for her to be afraid of.

Finally she and Gerry sat down side by side on the big couch in the centre of the room, and between kisses Gerry told her of his doubts and his fears. But the doubts seemed to vanish almost before they were expressed, and so, his conscience at rest, Gerry took out the ring and offered it in true knightly fashion. And Margery, like the little girl that she was, made him kiss it, and put it on her finger, and kiss the finger where he put it, and then kiss her and let her kiss him just for thanks. It was all like a game that they were playing, and both forgot that they were man and woman, making ready to undertake the biggest adventure that life can offer, but if they had remembered, they would have said that they had love enough and faith enough and courage more than enough for any kind of adventure.

It was Margery who remembered Craven.

"Where's grandfather?" she cried, a little contritely. "Oh, Gerry, we forgot all about him," whereat Craven appeared at the door, his eyes a little misty and his voice a little queer, as he said,

"Isn't anybody going to ask for my blessing?"

After that Margery had to pet him and cry a bit over him, for she realised just a little faintly that, after all, grandfather must be making a

pretty big sacrifice to let her marry Gerry, while Gerry himself was almost fearful of putting the question concretely to Craven. However, he came straight to the point,

"Uncle Dick, I love Margery and she loves me. May she marry me?"

"My dear boy, I thank the good fortune that has made Margery love you. You're the only man in the world to whom I could say, 'You have my permission, and my best wishes for all the happiness in the world.' Little girl, I might say a good deal about my own feelings in giving you to some one else, but I'll not say any of it. If you love Gerry and he loves you, you have found something very precious. Little Margery, keep that precious thing, and cherish it—in all life there is nothing like the love of a good man for a woman."

"Dear Grandfather," Margery answered, stroking his hair, "you're always such a dear, and Gerry and I will need you, you know, just as much when we're married as we do now." At which Gerry nodded emphatically, but Craven shook his head. But he did not say anything. Something flashed acoss his mind—a memory—and he went on holding Margery close and letting her stroke his head. When he did speak it was in a matter-of-fact tone that broke the brief pause, with its slight embarrassment for him and Gerry, with,

"But, children, I have an appointment to keep.

Why don't you run along and have luncheon together somewhere?"

"But we want you to come with us, Grandfather," Margery protested. But Craven would not go; it was their day, and in his heart he knew that in spite of the relief and joy that this union was bringing to him, there was a touch of the old bitterness, a hint of the old jealousy in his heart still. Not for worlds would he have Margery get a glimpse of it. So it was decided that they should go alone and meet him later, and they could all have dinner together.

CHAPTER XXI

CRAVEN GIVES "TIMBERVALE" TO MARGERY

IT was Craven who suggested that Gerry and Margery make their home at "TIMBERVALE." He had thought it all out, and had concluded that now at last Margery ought to have her birthright. At first Gerry hesitated; it seemed that with his own home so close by, they should go there. But the Gordon home was at best a poor place as compared with the big house of the Cravens, and then there was the fact that Gerry had never attempted to keep up his own place to any extent, and Margery, who should have been born and brought up at "TIMBERVALE," had never had a chance to know or love the house in which her mother had spent the only happy years of her life. If Gerry thought at all of the memories of Jean that would haunt "TIMBERVALE," he put the thought from him. He knew now that his love for Jean had been the love of a big brother; he wondered, indeed, if, had he and Jean married, they would have made much better a success of it than Jean and Heath had made, for it seemed as if he could no longer associate himself with Jean, any

more than he could associate himself with the old Craven, the man who had sneered and had jeered, and had found a pleasure in making other people uncomfortable. Jean's father and Margery's grandfather were two different men, and the Gerry Gordon who played with Jean Craven and let her tyrannise over him to her heart's content, was a different Gerry Gordon from the man who wanted to wrap the wings of his love about the small lovable girl Margery, and keep her from all harm, and make her life a happy, gladsome song.

So it was settled that "TIMBERVALE" should emerge from its dust and cobwebs, and its general decay, to give Gerry and Margery their permanent home, and though Craven would not promise to live with them, he did promise to be with them much of the time. Neither he nor Gerry wanted Margery to see "TIMBERVALE," however, until it was ready to receive her as its mistress, and therefore the two men went together, and Gerry did the plan-making and saw the work put through. It was well into September before the place was finished, and then Craven was satisfied that it was as nearly as it ever could be like the old "TIMBERVALE," save that it was considerably modernised. When he and Gerry had agreed that it was all ready, Margery had chosen the day and the hour for her wedding. And Richard Craven had tried to do for her what a mother would have done had she had one, while Gerry, full of the

same thought of this lack of a woman in Margery's life, had treated her with a gentle courtesy that had made possible the approach to a better understanding on the part of the girl as to what marriage in all its many phases of give and take might mean.

"Gerry is the ideal lover," Craven told himself. He began to see in these days that he had never before appreciated Gerry—had never before sounded the depths of him. For Gerry, sweet-tempered, good-natured, willing to please, had depths, but it had taken his love for Margery to stir the still waters and bring the best of him to the surface. Just as it had taken this same instinct to guard Margery against the fate of her mother to make Craven a new man, and turn his selfishness into unselfishness through the force of his great affection for this small, unprotected girl.

So the world of the two men revolved around the figure of Margery, and all that Jean had never been able to arouse in them, Margery aroused without effort and with entire unselfconsciousness.

Margery's wedding took place in Grace Church, at noon, on a warm October day, when the sun threw golden shadows over the gloomy pews and lighted the great windows to a splendour and triumph of colour. Into the hush of the solemn hour

stole the first notes of the wonderful organ, and to the stately measure of the wedding march Margery, a tiny figure in softest, filmiest white, moved with the sure, confident step of happy youth to the front of the atlar, and there passed from her grandfather's arm to the arm of her husband, while the big organ boomed forth the glory song of love triumphant in marriage.

There were no invited guests, but a few stray spectators sat in the long pews. And far back, near the door, one white-haired man watched the proceedings with eyes filled with a vague longing. The girl at the altar was his daughter; on his arm she should have walked forward in her wedding march; he it was who should have answered the question, "Who giveth this woman to be married?" Five thousand dollars a year or Margery —he had sold his birthright. It was like Heath to shed tears over the pity of it all, but to cling to his five thousand dollars. The tears would pass —the need for Craven's help would never pass. So he sat and watched his child and Jean's, and pitied, not the child, nor Jean, but himself.

CHAPTER XXII

THE WEDDING OF "TRUEHEART MARGERY"

IT was early evening, in the afterglow of a wonderful sunset, that Margery first saw "TIMBERVALE." Her heart beat a trifle wildly, while her little hands in their gloves grew cold as she looked upon the fine, old house, in its setting of green lawn and ancient trees and carefully grouped plants and flowers. No one would have dreamed that within a few months all this had been a worn, unkempt, wretchedly desolate place, for the hand of art had touched to life and colour the deadness and the dirt, while the hand of love had carried the gift of flowers to shed fragrance through the musty air.

The automobile drew up to the door and Gerry lifted Margery out. Smiling servants bowed the new master and the little mistress in—servants who did not remember another master or any other mistress.

Margery, like a child in a dream, followed Gerry; followed him through the rooms, listened almost absently to his explanations of them; smiled a little wanly when he attempted playful-

ness, and then at last burst into tears. Gerry, furious with himself for not having realised that the girl was tired and dazed, and perhaps missing Craven, set himself to work to comfort her; made her lie down and rest, and himself took off her shoes and stockings and bathed her poor little head. With the result that he soon had Margery laughing at him, her equilibrium restored, to Gerry's infinite relief, and her sense of humour coming to the rescue of her strained nerves.

After that, they had a dainty supper on the wide verandah, where the big trees drooped their boughs close over the roof, and Gerry found himself telling Margery of the days when Jean climbed all the trees and fell out of them one by one to the horror and disgust of Great-Aunt Matilda, who blamed Gerry for all Jean's escapades. All of which made Margery feel better acquainted with the real girl of the picture than she had ever felt before, while the possible sadness over never having known Mother Jean was banished by the touch of the human that Gerry's frank picturing of her gave. To Margery Jean would always be just a little girl; she had no conception of her as a mother, and this was perhaps just as well, since it made the figure of Jean one to contemplate, not with unhappiness, but with a feeling of gay camaraderie that permitted the presence of her memory to cast no shadow on the dawn of the new day beginning for Gerry and Margery.

As the darkness increased, the stars came out and then the moon, and the lawn at "TIMBERVALE" lay bathed in shimmering silver. Gerry brought Margery's warm sweater and made her put it on, and then they walked in the garden, and again Gerry showed her where Jean had come to meet Black Beauty on that birthday long ago, and Gerry promised Margery a Black Beauty of her own. Margery wondered if Grandfather were all right in his cottage, whither Craven had gone soon after the wedding, and Gerry was sure that Thomas would see to it that his master was comfortable, and then they fell into a sweet silence, in which Gerry waited and Margery wondered somewhat vaguely if Gerry didn't want to kiss her any more now that they were married. She put her arm closer into his and looked up at him a little shyly. Gerry felt the closer touch and looked down just in time to catch the sweet wonder of her glance. In an instant he had her in his arms, murmuring over her, tenderly, wonderingly, almost afraid to believe that the gentle yielding of her was in reality for him, but gradually realising that she was his, his, and not only because he wanted her but because she wanted him. This child was a woman, and she was his wife; she loved him with a woman's full and glorious love. Then it was that Gerry picked her up in his arms and carried her into the house,

where, kneeling beside her, he dedicated his manhood to her, while love called love, with the strength of the ages, to a fresh impulse to life.

And all the while the stars sang, in the moonlighted Heavens, the glorious love-song that was born in Paradise with the giving of the first woman to the first man.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN THE SUNSET WITH CRAVEN

AT the door of the cottage on the edge of the woods, Craven sat in the sunset, his long hand on the head of the dog Roderick.

"Margery and Gerry at 'TIMBERVALE,'" Craven murmured. "Little Margery and the boy Gerry. And somewhere in the world—Heath. Only Jean missing; only Jean needing to forgive." So he talked on, till old Thomas came to the door and reminded him that it grew damp; inside there was a fire in the study; would he not come and sit there? So Craven got up and went in, and the dog followed, and Craven and Thomas talked as two old men who have been together through many things in life will talk—of Jean and the old days, and Gerry, and Margery. Then Thomas went to close the place for the night and to make some preparations for morning, and Craven was left alone. He stared into the fire and saw images there: the long pageant of his life, with its pride, its selfishness, its ambitions, its disappointments. Once again he realised that the wrong angle in his life had been his attitude

toward other people. Had he used his wealth and his talents as he might have used them, he would have been to-day in the midst of friends, a significant figure among his fellow creatures. As it was he was only a name—no one knew him for himself and therefore no one loved him. No one save Thomas and the dog, and perhaps Gerry and, yes, Margery loved him. That to him was the wonder of it all; that she was his—even now that she was married to Gerry, she was still his; she would come to him with her kisses and her warm, young arms, and she would cuddle him and pet him and give him all the tender sweetness of her mother-heart. Her mother-heart—over that he lingered. Yes, some day she would come to him with the sweetest burden of all and put it into his arms, and on that day he would know that Jean had forgiven. So he dreamed on, and the heart of Richard Craven knew a strange, unusual peace.

THE END